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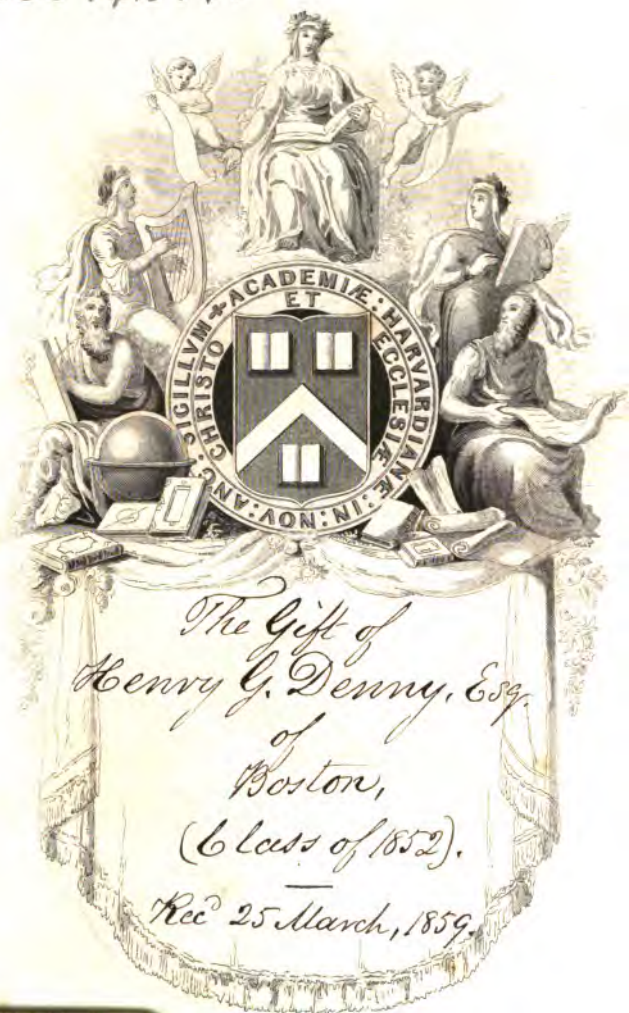
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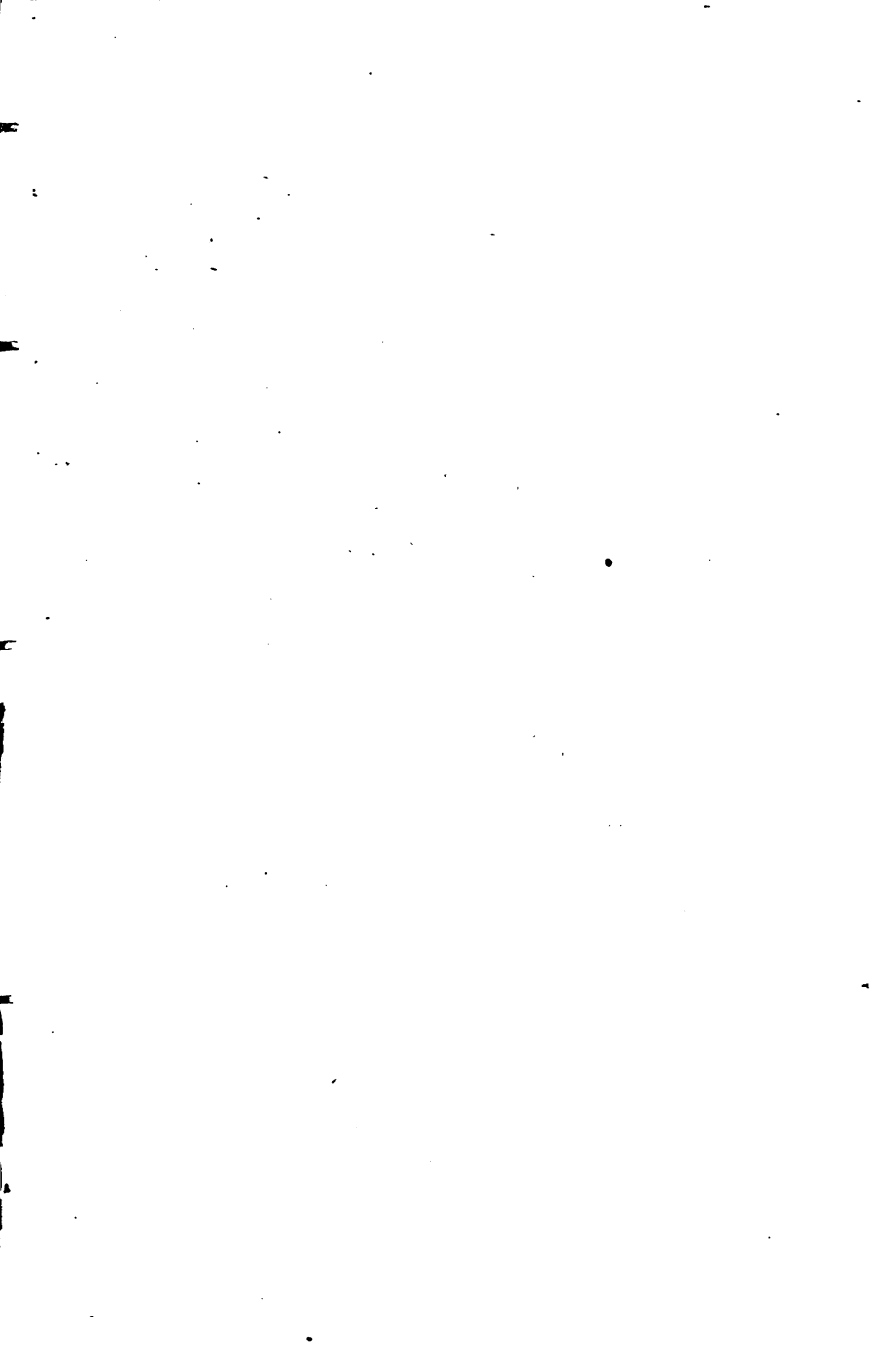
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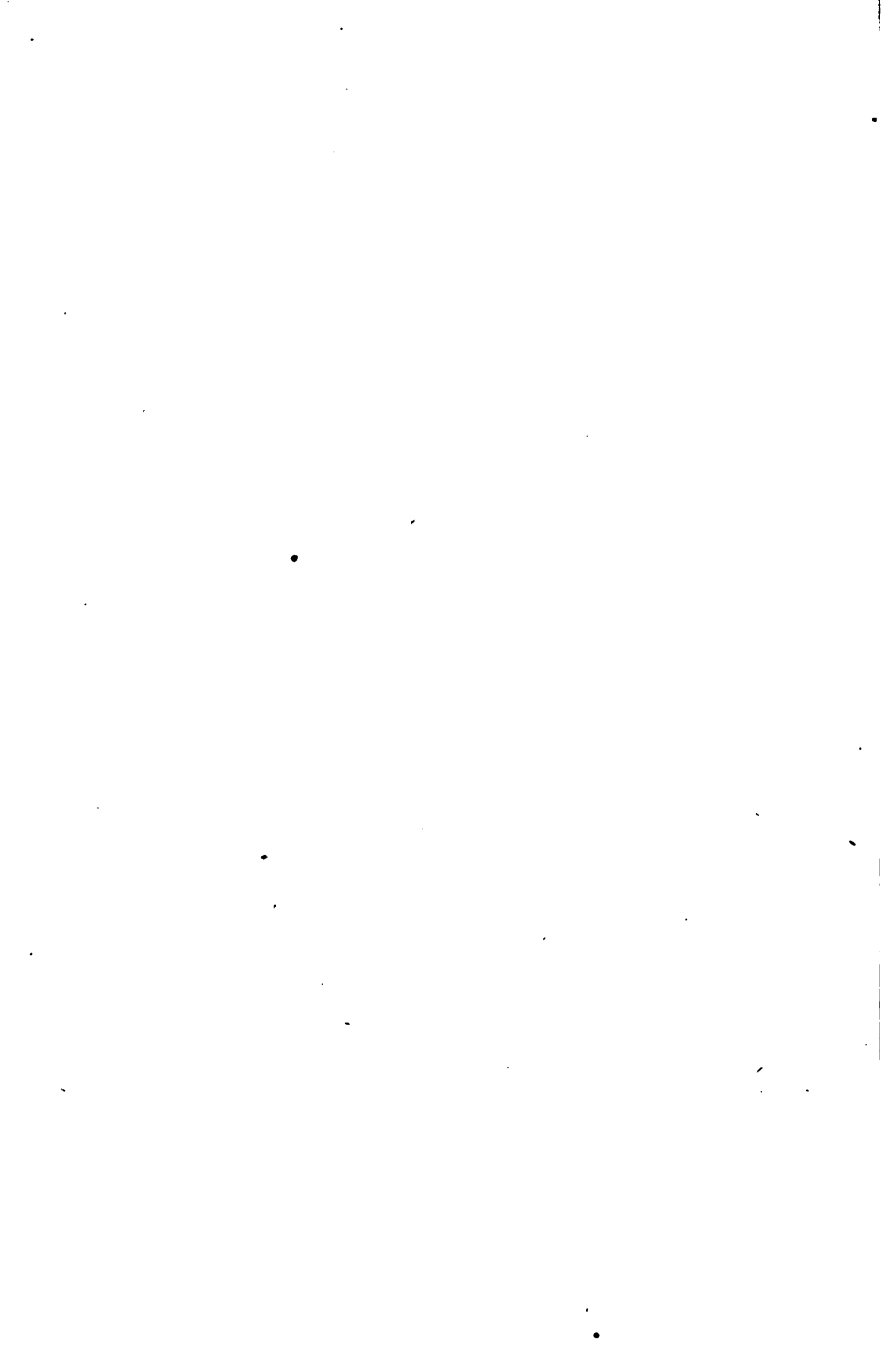
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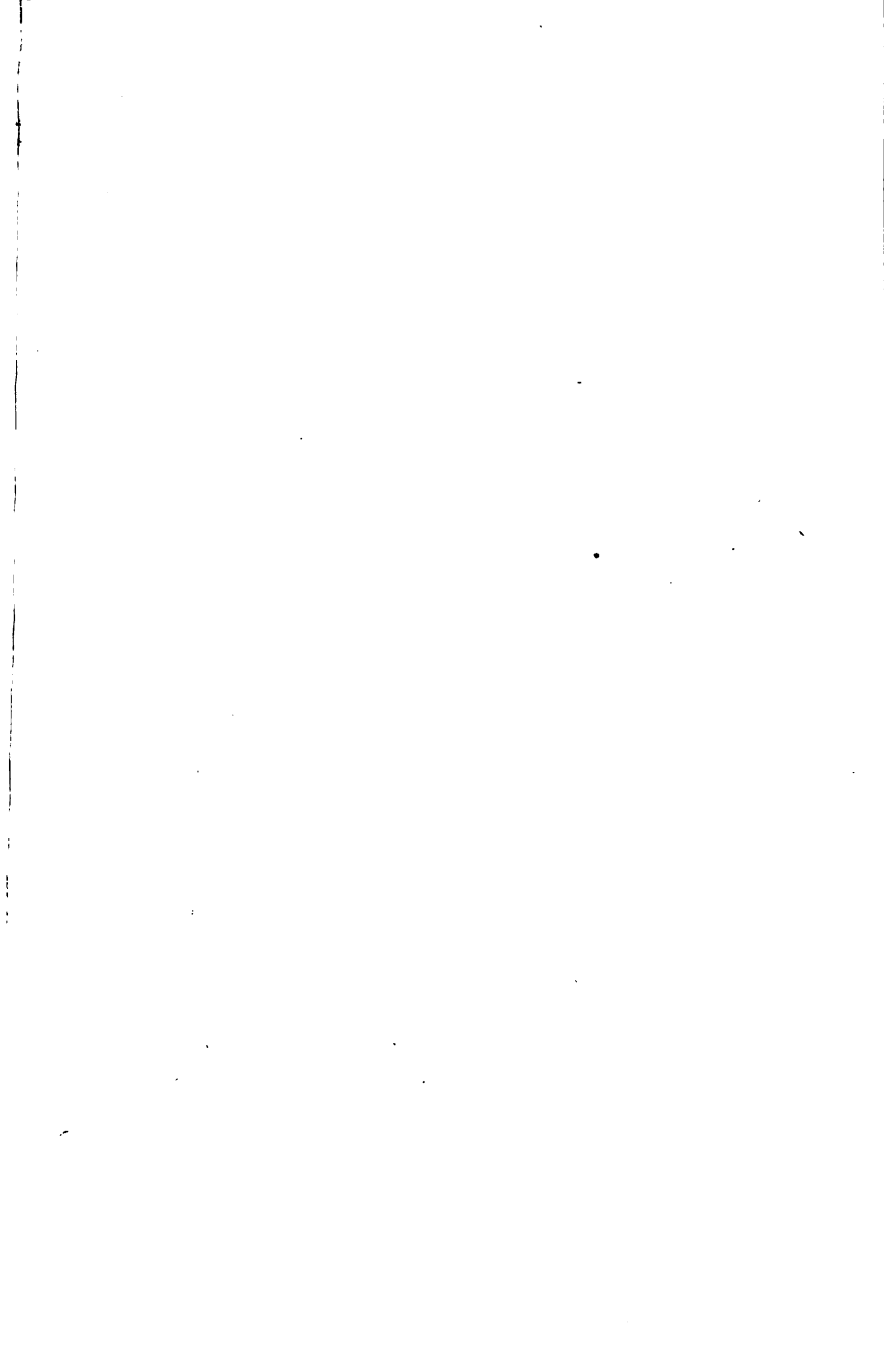


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CRYSTALLINE;

OR

The Heiress of Fall Down Castle.

A ROMANCE.

BY

F. W. SHELTON, A. M.,

AUTHOR OF "THE RECTOR OF ST. BARDOLPH'S," &C.

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## TO THE READER.

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THE incident on which this little tale is founded is not new, and is without doubt familiar to many. It is as old as the legend from which the charming composition of *LA GAZZA LADRA*, or the Thieving Magpie, is derived.

It was, however, from actual observation of the pranks of a mischievous bird, connected with a dim remembrance of the *libretto* of the opera, that the following pages were written.

TO THE READER.

It is not of so much importance from what quarter materials may be drawn, if the writer succeed in blending and interweaving them in a suitable manner, and after his own fashion. And so I submit this little Romance, as perhaps I have had the vanity to call it, to illustrate, beside other truths, the value of little things.

## CRYSTALLINE.

---

IN the territory of the Golden Duke, and in Valrosarum the loveliest part of all his vast domains, there stood in days gone by the ruins of an ancient castle. So much of all its several parts remained that the observant eye could readily complete the outline, and imagine what it had been at the period of its high renown. Unhurt by warring elements its tower still rose upon the solid rock, enwrapped with creeping vines and ivy, and commanding all the vale below. Seen by the moon's soft beams, it left upon the mind the influence of some melancholy poem which needed but the minstrel's music or the accompaniment of a harp.

Near the base of this tower stood an humble, unadorned dwelling, occupied by a worthy couple, impoverished now, but properly the heirs of all the neighboring grounds, and who might be said to live within the very shadows of their former greatness. A century before, their ancestor possessed the castle, the streams, the fertile acres, and yonder dark forest which is yet held sacred from the woodman's axe, in short as far as the eye could see. A single word pronounced in perilous times diverted all his wealth, made confiscate his vast estate by arbitrary act, and changed the face of his affairs. On such slight circumstances do human destinies appear to hinge.

Now as the castle, though in ruins, still conveyed the idea of grandeur, in all its courts and arches and tottering walls; so the poor knight though shorn of adventitious splendour, carried in his mien and presence the *prestige* of an old and generous race. In poverty he held his upright stature, for no man is noble who cannot prove by other than genealogic table the stock from which he sprang. Outward state is but an emblem of intrinsic merit, and when the first is accidentally maintained and the latter ceases, the patent of nobility is at an end. The hereditary

oadge is worn upon the heart. It is not that we can trace our blood drop by drop to some remotest age, while the thinner grows the stream and the farther off the gushing source the more it tingles proudly in the veins ; it is to be the fount itself of nobleness. But to aspire to be the offspring not the origin : to dole upon and subdivide among the heirs the glory which belongs to one alone ; to pluck a feather from the plume which graced the head of former gentleness ; this is the foppery of the vainest dolt, who would in fact disdain his ancestor. If then the knight enjoyed the exquisite sentiment of being well descended, it was because his blood had not become corrupted in its current, and though his castle was destroyed, his honour was unblemished, and he was one who would not wound the feelings of another, nor do a mean or sordid act for all the treasures of the Golden Duke.

It is true that there had sprung up around him a race of new nobility who looked upon their neighbour with a species of contempt. They considered him not enough humbled, because he abstained from the tokens of a servile respect. These people gave work enough for the professors of heraldry. But in vain their equipages flashed with silver and gold, the lack of an in-

nate sentiment was detected in the trivial affairs of life, and many of their mottoes had no meaning because they embodied no principle by which they had become signalized, or upon which they endeavored to act, or by which they had lawfully reached the pinnacle on which they stood. They knew the conventionalisms of a dinner table by rote, but into the clear and lucid depths of a refined nature they divined not. They were given to look down upon those who seemed beneath them, but had not that ever up-lifted gaze which belongs to the truly great or good. They were the creatures of accident, exalted by the same arbitrary enactment by which the other had become depressed. And, strange as it may appear, they were even jealous of his poverty, because the man himself could tower above misfortune and shed down grace and dignity upon a low estate.

Sir Ralph had been blest with an only son whom he regarded with an almost insane delight, and in the hopes of him were shrined the deepest and proudest instincts of his soul. How often with the child upon his knees he gazed upon those vacant courts where once his fathers dwelt, walked with him hand in hand, and mused upon the stones or clambered to the height of the tower

to point out the landscape as he thought of the coming day when restitution should be close at hand. For himself he should be slumbering with his kindred dust; it was enough to hope that the boy would hand down an honoured name, rebuild and occupy the desolate house. Such were his day dreams and his night visions. Perhaps it was a natural instinct, perhaps a weakness and a worldliness of the poor knight. The most efficient and hopeful means which appear to men are often not the ones which the Lord chooses to bring about a given end. But we shall see.

The child, who was of noble aspect, had attained to his fifth year, and controlled a better inheritance than of the castle, the devotion of his parents' hearts. Already from the disposition which he manifested it became safe to indulge in happy auguries of his destiny when he should reach a manly age. For he was superbly generous in those little things, which in the intercourse of playmates so often tax the selfish nature of a child.

Alas! upon a summer's morning, and when the flowers were all in bloom, he had just parted from his mother's side, and she had smoothed down his golden curls upon his back, placed on

him his belt and tunic, imprinted his lips with her last kiss, and sent him to chase the bees and butterflies in the fields. He strayed into a near enclosure, when a pet stag whom he approached too nearly, affrighted by some sudden motion, dashed his hoofs into the child's temples; and he was lifted from the earth, and with a veil of blood let down over his beautiful face, carried and deposited without monition in his mother's arms, dead. The idol was cast from its pedestal, and nothing left to worship instead. For years the knight scarcely looked up, but went about as one heart-broken, scarcely deigning to say a word. For the last ambition of his heart was disappointed, and the last tower of his house was gone, and even Hope, which adheres to ruins like the green ivy, struggled with all its tendrils in the dust. His grief also was too proud and sacred to brook the sympathy of men, or to allow a single witness of his falling tears. For many and many a day the fount was dry, but when it flowed anew it partook of that bitterness which one's own heart alone knows. He retired within himself, complained to no one, and walked alone.

But the wife's temper was matchless and more refined by grief. Like the rose beaten by some sudden blast, and rifled of its flowering stem, she

sprang up freshened, as if the sun of cheerfulness had not been dimmed. Such holy resignation was better than the moody stillness of the knight. For her no heaviness endured but for a season, and no sorrow ever bordered on despair. The evil and the good were alike blessings sent by God, although it is hard for the ungrateful, or for the grateful properly to recognise this fact. But she rose above misfortune with that preternatural strength often displayed by woman, when the strong man is dismayed. Thus we may oft observe the powerful sun is dimmed in lustre, or lost to sight through scudding mists, while the moon, which borrows her rays from him, sails through the blackest night, and struggles on, and still emerges in her silvery boat, and skirts the clouds with glory.

Some years after the event above narrated, when just on the verge of old age, the worthy couple were favored with the birth of a daughter. Although the place which the boy occupied was still left vacant in their hearts, and the wound which his loss had caused was deemed irreparable by time, the little stranger was a welcome guest, and they hoped even that she had been born to fulfill some special purpose. She seemed like some new inheritance, whose value

was mysteriously enhanced because it was yet unknown. No sooner was she born than Sir Ralph went to his boy's grave, and for the first time in the softness of his feelings knew the luxury of grief. He even wept with a strange delight. The years which had passed since his bereavement seemed vacant, and he felt as if a twin spirit had been preserved. The one had been taken, but the other had been left. His secret murmurings which had been unuttered then died away in the solitude of his heart, and kneeling before the altar he audibly expressed his gratitude to God. His wife looked angelic in her expression as if some prayer had been answered, and some highest blessing had been attained.

The child was when born so exceedingly diminutive in size that she was placed with all her swaddling clothes and fine laces in a silver flagon, of which the lid could be pressed down, while the slipper which fitted her tiny foot, the yellow kid slipper, has been preserved to this day. No small curiosity was excited in the neighbourhood to see the new heiress of Fall Down Castle, as it was contemptuously called, and while the people expressed their congratulations as they looked upon the snowy pillow where the "miserable little

thing" lay, they did not fail to say when they got out of sight, that she could not live but for a few days, that she must at all events prove sickly, that it was a pity that she had been born. And what if she should survive! She would be left a friendless orphan at the very time when she would need protection most. But children of this kind often disappoint the expectations formed of them, and grow up to make some figure in the world, while those who are hardy and robust come to naught.

Contrary to the predictions of the knowing ones, the little girl was not buried in a fortnight, but expanded from month to month into such a prize as would have been envied even by the Golden Duke, and at last she grew to be so lovely that the nurse could toss her up on her arms without shame. One day Hilario, who had been long absent beyond the seas, came into those parts to visit his old friend, Sir Ralph, and the moment that he beheld the child, whose countenance beamed suddenly with a fitting and infantile smile as if to recognize some one whom she had seen before, he was astonished, or pretended to be astonished at her charms, and lifting up his hands, exclaimed with rapture, in words which seemed to the parents like so much Gos-

pel truth,—“ What eyes !—what beaming features ! what transparent complexion !—She is a little fairy. Crystalline,” he said, snapping his fingers above her head with glee, “ Crystalline !” The appellation pleased the parents. The next day she was taken to the parish church, and as the baptismal waters sparkled on her pure brow, she received the name of Crystalline.

As she advanced in age and time passed on, without adding any new misfortune to the now happy pair, she became more engaging, and her attractiveness arrested the attention of all who saw her. When she approached her teens, she was no longer so diminutive, but although lithe and slender, tall beyond her years, she bade fair in a short time to become marvellously beautiful. Her form was erect and well proportioned, her eyes soft and baffling in their conflicting shades, and her complexion so clear and transparent in its purple light, that it was as if a lamp had been shrined in some bust of purest alabaster. Wherever she went she had already a native dignity of demeanour, and glided queen-like and graceful, as if she had been a woman grown. In character she singularly blended the traits of her parents, so as to form a new and unique composition, borrowing some quality from either, but unlike both,

just as two colours mingle to make a different hue. Like her father, she was inclined to be reserved and stately, like her mother, tender and sympathetic, but sometimes vivid and passionate, as if she had not been their child. Altogether sweetness and goodness blended in her whole nature which was imbued with those holy principles in which she had been early taught. She was pious without pretence, and in the parish church as she meekly raised her eyes in devotion she seemed like one of those paintings of the Madonna which are so often seen. By the poor, the sick, and the afflicted, she was regarded as a little sister of charity, forever out on her kind and unobtrusive errands, an angel in disguise. But Crystalline scarcely mingled with other children in their sports. She had for the most part a serious and composed, though not a solemn mien, sometimes giving place to a wild unnatural gayety, in which mood, however, she sought no companions, and the cause of it was known to herself. Here was where the first anxiety of her parents began. A conduct, sometimes inexplicable and a bewildered air, gave rise to the most acute and painful forebodings, until at last, having thought that they discovered the cause, they were freed from uneasiness and reconciled it with

a theory of their own. They became convinced that there was something in the future destiny of the child, which no illumination which they yet had would suffice to reveal. And they felt more and more that she was safe in the hands of God, and would not, like the little Ralph, be snatched away, until she had fulfilled the errand on which she had been sent. Bright and beautiful apparition in the world of sorrow is an innocent child ! crossing and recrossing the clouded pathway, like a gleam of light ; the harbinger of an effulgent morning, and the embodied form of Hope.

In Crystalline there was a remarkably developed sentiment for one so young. She had an affection and that of the tenderest kind, which engrossed her thoughts and imparted a certain hue to all her conduct. Nay, it might have been the secret influence so impressing her as to have excited a just alarm in the breast of those to whom she was dear. Perhaps you may not understand the idea exactly, but if I refer to an erotic tendency, even that is not a thing unknown at such a tender age. But this has no reference to the subject. A holier feeling, perhaps the less unusual but still true, had taken possession of her mind, and actuated her from day to day wherever her steps were turned, and this had sprung without

fostering, without observation, like a true instinct of the soul. In the ancient tower of the castle she had a furnished apartment of her own, to which she was wont to retire at will, a place by reason of its solitude and desolate situation, entered by no intruding step, and where she kept those treasures which children sacredly preserve. But if you had privilege to enter there, it looked like no baby-house of a little girl. Its walls were hung with needle-work, and many specimens of the art of delicate embroidery which were made long ago, with blistered pictures rescued from some old garret, but precious still, with many fanciful lists of ancient tapestry, scissored out around the spots where the moths had made great havoc, while on a high and slender toilet table covered with purest and finest linen, was placed the WORD OF GOD.

Oh consecrated tower!—if ever a spirit hovered around that ancient castle, it seemed to dwell there still among the ruins. Into the windows the vines insinuated their green tendrils, and birds built their nests about it, and oftentimes voluntarily engaged themselves in the little room. It was a lovely spot after you had once reached it by the fatiguing stairs; for underneath the river glided, and the vale wound between the lofty mountains,

and over a thousand acres without an intervening fence or hedge the wheat waved. Far beyond you could behold the sea and its white capped breakers, and the sails of ships ploughing the deep, for this chamber was in the uppermost part of the tower. The lower rooms were occupied by the farmer and his wife. Crystalline had among her treasures a little cabinet of rose-wood kept sacredly locked, and it contained a miniature of ivory, set in a plate of gold. Sometimes she would gaze upon it for hours in silence, and seemed to pass into another world, and then she would pass to that part of the castle where the chapel had once been, and stand till poor Annette was sent to call her home. And this was the picture of little Ralph, her brother, who died before she was born, and who was buried in the vault beneath the chapel, a ruin among ruins. It indicated a peculiar organization to have formed an attachment so intense for one whom she had never seen, never known, and the impress of whose moral features had not been made. She did not love the memory of her brother :—that could not well be :—she loved her brother. For her he had never died, and she had developed by degrees an imaginary form and character suitable to those lineaments on which she loved to gaze. He was in fact her play mate, her com-

panion, the co-occupant of her tower, her twin-spirit growing up together with her, linked to her by some angelic bond. Her smiles were reflected from his, her gladness was borrowed from another sphere, in the grove and in the garden she walked together with him. Yet how account for this when the knight never opened his lips about his son, only the mother when she showed the picture to Crystalline had only told her that she had a little brother in the skies. But the manner of his death she mentioned not; she made no allusion to the curtain of blood. From the moment that she possessed this knowledge, Crystalline was like a child who goes through winding allies and walks, seeking diligently for her play-mate, and calling him often by name, until at last by the hyacinthine borders, she finds him with exceeding joy, and they wander ever after through the sweet garden hand in hand. Enshrined in his transparent form, and finding purity on earth, this heavenly messenger, if such he were, must have dearly loved his mortal sister. For in her eyes beamed forth the calm expression of requited passion, a passion such as common lovers never know.

With that singular reserve which belonged to her nature, Crystalline did not indicate this com-

panionship, no, not to the parents whom she loved. But I have said that they divined something. Were they right?

One evening just as the day declined, and the full round moon rose up out of a cleft between two mountains, Sir Ralph and his wife sat under a grape arbour in the open air, cheerfully conversing with the parish priest. Just then Annette approached from the neighbourhood of the castle, her boddice wound around with ivy, and her head adorned, ballad-singing as she passed.

"Know you her history?" said the Knight to the priest.

On the latter replying in the negative, he said, "She is a native of a neighbouring province, and of a village of some note. She had been long a servant in our house, but in her sixteenth year returned to her parent's roof. There an attachment sprang up between her and a farmer's lad, a good boy in all respects. They became plighted, and with the consent of all friends, a day had been appointed for the nuptials, and Annette's wedding dress had been prepared. There was in that town a cathedral church, which, although it had been two hundred years in course of building, was but just complete. The spire needed capping, and it was a dangerous and a dizzy en-

terprise to climb above the scaffolds to the extreme point, adjust the cross and then return.

The common workmen shrank from the attempt, and it was then resolved to send a messenger to the next seaport town, where a vessel lay, and secure the services of a brave tar, who had become steeled to danger, and whose head had been accustomed to awful heights and to yawning chasms in the stormy deep. When the messenger arrived the ship had sailed, and only a white speck in the distance could be descried. Then did the master builder, unwilling to have his work retarded, make proclamation and a tempting offer, no less than a double golden eagle, to him who should successfully perform the task. The next day Albert was to be married and the thought occurred to him, that could he win the prize, what a present could he make to his expected bride. In an instant he accepted the challenge bravely, dashed down his cap and jacket on the ground, and began to make his aerial ascent. The rumour flew, and all the people of the town collected speedily at the base of the cathedral tower. Annette was there with gaiety of heart to look upon the sight, but when the adventurer emerged from out the loophole of the tapering spire, she recognized the form of her be-

trothed. As he approached the apex, clambering upward like a spider on his thread, the spectacle became exciting; poor Annette's heart beat alarmingly, and the great multitude stood as still as death. And now had he reached the summit, adjusted the ropes and pullies, when with a daring boldness he mounted the cap stone and made obeisance to the crowd. The air rang with plaudits. The work was done.

Alas! the exulting cheers had but just reached him, when his head reeled, he lost the presence of his mind, for a few seconds he swayed from right to left as one who struggles to regain his balance, the audience held their breath, then shut their eyes, and uttered a cry of horror as he fell down from the perilous eminence, and was dashed to death upon the stones. Poor Annette sank upon the earth, and from that moment her reason fled. At first, she became a wild maniac, and at last a harmless simpleton, which she now is. A year passed away, and she still lived beneath her parent's roof, object of pity and compassion to all the town when—let me tell you now the worst—some fiend in human shape seduced the idiot child. It seems impossible, and you will scarce believe it," said Sir Ralph.

"Aye, but I do believe it," replied the parish priest.

"Not long ago, our daughter met her in the fields by accident, it would seem, if accidents may happen in the world."

"Sparrows fall not without notice," said the priest.

"I begin to think so," replied the knight. "Her feet were bare and bleeding from having been cut by the flinty stones. She must have been a day or two without food or shelter in the woods, and she was adorned as you have now seen her, and her head all dressed with wild flowers. Our daughter embraced her tenderly, bound up her bleeding feet, conducted her safely to her old home, and then besought us with tears which we could not disregard, to receive and shelter poor Annette."

"Sweet child," exclaimed the priest.

The eyes of the mother sparkled as he said it, and tears distilled upon her cheek.

Scarce had this narrative been ended, when in the same direction from the castle, and with a bounding step and cry of exultation, Crystalline advanced, exclaiming: "Oh the little people! the little people!" and then ran to fling her arms about the form of poor Annette. The priest

was taken by surprise, for to this conduct he had been a stranger. He uttered not a word, but he said to himself, "God preserve this worthy couple, but here are two crazy people in one family, or signs deceive." But he was the more perplexed and astonished still, when the parents merely smiled, even not at all embarrassed, and took no notice of the child.

Silence supervened, but at last the knight broke it, and said: "You must know that when our child was born, we did not think that her life would be long preserved. For she was so fragile that a breath of summer might have blown her away. Almost every day her continuance was as great a marvel as her presence; but when she surmounted every day, and in spite of all predictions, still lived and grew; when she increased in beauty and in promise, and in heart and form became more and more like an angel upon earth, we began to divest ourselves of every fear, and concluded, whether justly or not, that she had been sent for some special purpose amongst us. But although calmer and serious in her ordinary moods, we were at last led to fear that her mind had become bewildered from some such conduct as you have observed, and particularly after we had received again under our roof the poor Annette. Think you that madness is contagious.'

"Not at all. I never have heard of such a thing," replied the priest.

"Nor I," said the knight,—“it is scarce possible, but not in the case of Crystalline, for I am inclined to think”—and this he said half laughing, half in a serious mood,—“that the fairies, or some other powers, have her in protection, and although we see them not, they may be in some sense made manifest to the delicate perceptions of an innocent child. Instigated by supernatural power, she has sometimes done that which is beyond her age and strength. You see those ruins! I have sat here late at night, and beheld the very stones which there lie scattered, built anew, and the lights gleaming, and the personages moving about among the furnished rooms. I have been with my ancestors, nor can I think the vision, though fleeting and unsubstantial, altogether unreal or untrue. It imaged something, not only that which had been, but that which is to be. I know not how it is, but of a truth, this child of ours seems to have had her existence in some other world before ever she was born here, going back beyond her birth in imagining what we once felt, and in describing that which experience has alone proved.”

The priest cast down his eyes in silence for a few moments, then slowly and deliberately raising them up, expressed himself after this manner :—

“ Your child is certainly beyond her years in Christian graces. I have long marked her pious conduct and devotion to the poor, and have often followed in the path where she has been before to smooth the pillow of the distressed. So unostentatious and unobtrusive is her charity that you and yourself, are not aware of the good which she has done. She may dance lightly with a heart of innocence and gayety, but she never steps with the foot of pride. She is one of those who are at least early fitted for a translation to a brighter sphere, but you have well said, Sir Knight, that God in his wise Providence, will permit her to fulfil the errand on which she came. Think you that it is enveloped in some mystery, and would you know what it is ? It is to build up the fallen,”—the Knight opened his eyes—“ to humble the proud and exalt the humble, to show the weakness of strength and the strength of weakness, to put to confusion the wiles of adversaries, and to prove to those who rely upon the great, the value of little things. The fairies which you

speaking of are but the figures of the poet, yet doubt not that she may have some guardian angel, of whose presence she may be sensible, though it be unseen by her mortal eyes, and may be surrounded by a circling band of bright intelligences who are sent to shape the course of human things. Fear not for Crystalline."

Just here the conversation ended, for Hilario was seen advancing, and the Knight arose to grasp his hand. They all entered the house.—Annette returned to draw the curtains, and to light the lamps, and Crystalline gliding in like a sylph, sat down before her harpsichord and sang. In recitative and with low accompaniment, and in fitful, changing measures she rehearsed a tale. "A white dove went abroad to seek out sustenance for her young. Hovering above their nest, a sudden tempest wafted her away. In vain she poised upon her wings, and strove to stem the blast. Worn out and baffled she was carried unresistingly toward the sea. A gray eagle sat upon a rock, and hearing her lament, he said, 'What ails thee, gentle dove?' and she said, 'The tempest has borne me far from home, and my young doves starve.' Then pity touched the noble bird. 'Lament no more,' he said, 'and I

will lend you wings, for mine are made to battle with the storm.' Then bearing her aloft he beat the air with mighty strength, and rose in the tranquil atmosphere above the storm, and with a single swoop brought the poor mourner to her wished-for home. Thus was a meek dove gifted with an eagle's wings; while the eagle felt the soft compassion of a dove."

Such was the burden of the story, and as she sang the music stole upon the senses of the listeners, it was like the voice of a prophetic Sybil from the cave. Sometimes the note of lamentation died away so magically less that the boundary line which separated it from the realm of utter silence could not be discerned, and again it shrieked and wailed with the high tempests while the chords vibrated with a tremulous roll. When she had ceased, Hilario and the parish priest stood riveted upon the spot, but ere a word was said, again she swept the chords and sang a wildly plaintive melody. Thus the evening stole away, one guest departed, and Hilario arose soon after to take a long farewell, for before the same hour of another night should come around he would be upon the deep. But as this old friend kissed the lips of Crystalline, he placed a package in her hands well sealed and stamped, to be opened

on the occasion which he named. Having done so, he took it back for a moment, called for writing materials, and in rude verses, (for Hilario pretended to be no poet) hastily endorsed it thus :—

“ When the beams of morning bright,  
Chase the shadows of the night,

Crystalline !—

And the peaceful dove shall rest  
Frightened never from her nest,

Crystalline !—

When a bridal veil shall fall  
Snowy white upon the hall,

Crystalline !—

Hilario bids you break the seal,  
There to learn for common weal,  
What the writing shall reveal,

Crystalline !—

As the night was clear and balmy, Sir Ralph accompanied his friend some distance on his way, but when the moment of separation came, they returned once more, walked round and round the enclosures, (for they were discoursing of days gone by) until at last the clock tolled twelve.— They passed and counted every stroke. “ Ah !” said Hilario, “ it is the self same sound which called us to our studies when we were young,

and while we have been unmindful of the hours it has been a faithful chronicler until now.— When shall we two stand together and listen to that sound again? Whatever may befall us, let us be buried in each other's hearts, my friend." Thus they embraced and parted, never more to meet this side the grave.

One afternoon as Crystalline was going on a visit of mercy to the poor widow Maud, Mam Bess, the aged nurse who had lived for many years in Sir Ralph's family, said to her, "Do not be gone until evening, darling, for many evil persons are on the moor," and with this she gave into her hands the little basket which she always carried with her in her walks. Two persons stood at the gate as she passed out, the one a pilgrim of a fair countenance, but in a tattered garb, the other who arrived at the same time by accident, was dark and swarthy, his elf locks straggled over his face, his dress was foul and his expression bad. The first asked only for water to allay his thirst, the other in a gruff, hoarse voice, and in a mumbling way implored for alms. With pleased alacrity she answered their requests, and beg-

ged the pilgrim to be seated, while straightway unclasping her purse she gave the beggar a silver coin. He took it with small gratitude, and with a greasy bag upon his back went moping on his way. The other eyed him with a fixed, stern gaze, then turned to Crystalline and with a smile observed, "I have come to Valrosarum from the place where lives the Golden Duke, and the better to observe the country and the people I proceed on foot. You see I carry but a staff and wallet, sometimes I meet with fair treatment and sometimes foul. One likes to see all kind of people, even at the expense of sour looks and unkind words. The latter affect me but a little.— Good humor with a tattered robe is better than the garments of a prince. Thank you, fair lady," he said with a slight bend, as he put down the glass which had been filled with cool water from the well, "the gift is slight, but a Divine One has said that a token such as this shall not be without reward." The heart of Crystalline was penetrated with the stranger's gracious looks, and she could scarce dismiss him from her mind as she went upon her way. As she recognised those whom she met, as she repeated the prayers which she used in her walks alone, as she stood upon the bridge which spanned the narrow stream, and ap-

peared to be looking on the shadows reflected in the clear wave, the pilgrim was in fact still present to her view. At last the idea was tiresome, and she was striving to reflect on something else, as she stood before the widow's gate.

"Good morrow, Miss Crystalline," was suddenly uttered in a sarcastic, feminine voice, "and what, pray, are you thinking about, with your head down? Out, I suppose, on some mock charity; and what good does it do? Have poor people any gratitude? None. But if you have no taste for better company, you have a right to select your own. The land is full of paupers, and we shall have more still if young women must be running about with baskets full of tit-bits to encourage them in sloth. 'Tis not an hour ago that I dismissed a vagabond who had a good enough face I warrant you, who was coolly seated beneath our porch, viewing the landscape as if it were his own—the impudence of the man! He will remember the lesson which I gave him if he ever comes here again."

She who spake this was Violante, the daughter of a new-made Count. She was a large formed, flashing beauty, such as would please the taste of some, her eyes jet-black and piercing, and capable of no softer shade. She was moreover, a

wealthy heiress, and pampered from her birth, and thwarted never in her slightest wish. But in temper she was haughty, disdainful, jealous, and would willingly dash her foot against a mirror which reflected a fairer image than her own. She was even cruel when her envy was excited, and without those gentler charms and attributes which confer such lustre on a lovely woman. Thorns in her side were the attractions of the more youthful "heiress of Fall Down Castle." While the latter was employed on charitable errands, she was devoted to the world in its most heartless forms and vapid fashions. At this very time her mind was filled with one idea. She had been overhauling her most costly dresses, and marshalling her pearls and jewelry for the great occasion of a ball which was to be given by the neighbouring great folks in honour of an expected visit of the Prince of Calos, eldest son of the Golden Duke. Nay, it was even whispered that she aspired to no less an honour than his hand. This ball with its attractive splendours had been the only topic with the young and giddy for a month or more. And not with them alone. At scenes like these, matrons whose day is past, share in the general flutter, and see the image of their former selves reflected in their daughter's charms,

while many a parched and withered form begins to invoke the rouge, and hunt rejuvenating cosmetics to conceal the wrinkles of an almost corpse. The rivalry begins at once, fanned and excited by the fitting of every boddice and in the rehearsal drag of every train, by the upholding to the light of every tiara and bejewelled wreath. Servants flatter, and seamstresses approve. How many reports are compared, how many summons fly past each other on the wind! But as the time draws near the pulse in fragile bodies throbs at fever heat. Oh, the ball! the ball!—talked of from morning 'till night, dreamed of from night 'till morning. Brains weary already of the exhilarating waltz. The music has no echo which reaches all round, and seems to be heard in advance as clearly as it can be repeated afterwards, in like manner as anticipation corresponds to memory. In short, while the right-minded and those of true principles can make amusement to subserve its proper end, to the heartless and the vapid it is an essential vanity, and Heaven itself is not so much in prospect as the coming ball

When Crystalline, who deigned no answer to Violante but a look, entered the abode of her old pensioner and emptied the stores of her little bas-

ket, she received such greeting as was a contradiction to the proud girl's words. For tears are gems of purest water when illuminated by the sunshine of a grateful soul. This poor old woman had arrived at an exceeding age, a worthy object for the charitable, not for her afflictions only, but for the spirit in which they had been borne.

She tottered on the verge of ninety years, yet her eye shone brightly, and her face beamed with cheerfulness and joy. The more the Lord took away her earthly props, the more she leaned upon the Lord. She had a daughter who at last remained to her after all other reliance had been removed. In the case of these two the parental relation seemed to have been reversed, for the daughter was a model of tenderness and affection, watching over the aged and infirm with the same unremitting assiduity as if the latter had been a child. It seemed to be her sole duty, her one object and engrossing office, whose claims were paramount and from which no allurements without could distract her heart. One Sunday as Mary walked from church a shadow followed hers, and as she arrived at the gate of her mother's cottage a young man whom she regarded much, took her by the hand, looked friendly in her eyes, and in a few simple words asked her to

be his own. In a moment the roses fled from Mary's cheeks, but when they came again they bloomed in triumph, for the victory was beautiful as the struggle had been brief. One of ordinary human foresight could easily predict for what purpose God had hitherto preserved so excellent a child. It was to repay the affection of one who would otherwise be left to the cold charities of the world, to watch over the pillow of her declining parent, and at last to close her eyes tenderly in death. God in His inscrutable Providence did the reverse of this. He removed the daughter, and he left the old, the feeble, the apparently useless stock. "Oh Maud! Maud!"—said one of those who came to comfort her when her child was to be carried to the grave, "say not that God is just, else would he not have brought you to this."

"Tempter!" she replied almost in anger, "have you come hither to console me thus? Would'st thou question God? Let him do what seemeth Him good. Holy and revered be His name." When Crystalline had performed her errand, and was about to return, Maud called her back, and placing on her arm a wreath of artificial flowers which she made with her own hand begged her to lay it on her daughter's grave.

Such was the custom of the place, nor are such emblems to be despised. The young girl willingly complied with her request. Now as she passed out of the gate, walking under the high oaks which stood near Maud's cottage, she perceived a scarlet thread hanging in the path and slightly swaying in a faint breeze. So trivial a circumstance seems hardly worthy of mention as having any connexion with the history of Crystalline.

If you were in the woods, and athwart the path were to see a spider's thread woven on which the sun shone, and should brush it carelessly away as you walked on, would you suppose that anything serious could come to pass from so doing? Nevertheless, that slender fibre might be a silvery bridge connecting two realms of joy and sorrow, and to break it down become the critical act of a man's life. He may have gone through fire and water, while the snapping of the spider's thread would seal his fate. It serves to show the value of little things, and this we will call the very thread of the present story, because it was in fact the silken link binding together the past and future in the history of Crystalline.—When she saw it, she paused a moment, and then inadvertently seizing the end of the scarlet fibre

wound it round and round her finger. "Upon my word," she said, when after pulling for some time it still yielded and continued to descend, "I shall soon get possession of the whole skein. The worms must have dyed the cocoons in red mulberries, and spun upon the tree tops." Scarcely had she spoken this, when the string became attached above, and refused to yield, and on giving it a sudden jerk, a sharp and shrill cry was heard aloft, and something fell into her bosom as cold as an ice-drop. She thrust her hand upon the spot and flung it away with a shudder, supposing it to be some worm or stinging insect, but looking down she beheld upon the grass at her very feet, a ring set with the most costly diamonds. She took it up, breathed upon it, and rubbed it upon her sleeve, when the gems gave forth that pure and serene lustre which rust cannot destroy, and which ages of burial in a cavern cannot quench. On the inner part of the golden rim was inscribed, *To the lovely, from one who loves*:—and immediately opposite on the same rim, *To her who is worthy*. With face beaming with admiration at so unexpected a possession, she hurried back to the old Maud, and holding forth her fingers, one girded with a scarlet cincture and the other blazing with jewels, "See,"

she said, "what the little people have sent me." Then she narrated in every particular how she had found the ring.

"My child," exclaimed the aged woman, embracing her, when the eager narrative was ended, and placing the ring upon her finger, "do not as you have said;" for Crystalline declared her intention of presenting it as an offering to a neighbouring shrine. "It is a direct gift, and may have fallen from the angels in Heaven. Wear it upon your hand, and be assured that in the end no evil will come out of it," So saying, she confirmed it upon her finger, and tenderly kissed her.

Oh! how happy, happy, happy, was Crystalline! She went forth with the wreath upon her arm, and with the ring upon her finger actually dancing and singing over the heath. It was autumn, and the reapers were just gathering in the last sheave of the golden grain, and girls followed after to collect what had been left behind, and the thought of Ruth, the gleaner, whose exquisite story came up afresh and filled her whole mind. It bore a resemblance to the attachment of Mary, who clave to her mother only, and brought back that tender expostulation, which she repeated over and over again:—"Intreat me not to leave

thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God, my God."

Presently she approached the borders of the Dark Forest, which formerly belonged to the domains of the Castle, and in which her ancestors had been accustomed to hunt the deer and the wild boar, and still the primeval trees were preserved, for there the sound of the axe was never heard, and nothing but a tempest occasioned the crash of some falling oak decayed at the roots. Suddenly the thought struck her, for the sun was two hours high, that she would enter the wood and collect a few fresh wild flowers to complete the wreath. Squeezing herself under the bars of the gate through a space so small that you would say that no one could get under it, she rose up, and walked in a clear and well defined road of great breadth, which had been made from time immemorial through the forest. The magnificent and over-arching branches cast a shadow in the way, just like the gloom of the old cathedral, and she felt disposed to kneel upon the sod. For who has walked within the grove and never felt its hallowing and religious influence! It steals upon you, and awakes your inmost soul to wor-

ship God. Sweetly the birds sing upon the branches, and softly the air causes the leaves to wave, while the tinkling brooks go by, and make a silvery melody.

At first she was led to a considerable distance by the lack of flowers, and afterward still farther by their abundance. Plenty and want may alike conduct the steps astray. But having a heart of innocence and gayety she stepped very quickly, and scarce knew the distance which she made, till at last insensibly leaving the beaten track, where the very blades of grass refused to grow, she was allured into the dells and secluded spots where the sweet inhabitants of the moor delight to dwell and blush unseen. Fragrantly they breathed upon her, and although the season was far advanced, their roots gathered sustenance from the running brooks, and the straggling sunbeams had warmth enough to woo their buds to bloom. It was an enticing sport to follow on and clip them as they flowered in single file. "Ah!" said a wise philosopher, lifting up his hands in extacy, when he had once suddenly encountered a bank of violets in the woods—"The man who has not a soul for flowers is not fit to live."

Presently the sun sunk below the lowest limbs of the trees and blazed through the forest with

its multitude of rays. On attempting to regain the main path, Crystalline became bewildered, and after wandering hither and thither to no purpose, she at last paused, attempting to go no farther, and bursting into tears acknowledged herself to be lost in the woods, What was her exceeding joy when at the very moment when she most needed succour, she beheld advancing an old woman. Toothless and decrepid, she was literally bowed down beneath a bundle of faggots, which she carried on her back. She was hooded, and wore a short mantle, and approached panting and complaining, when she beheld the young girl, saying, "Woe is me!—woe is me!—Ah! ah!" and "Oh, oh! Help me darling. I am a poor old woman, and my hut is near by. Go a few steps out of your way to see a sick child, my little lady, and God will reward you for your pains."

Crystalline joyfully consented, and desired to relieve her of the bundle of sticks, while the poor old creature on her part promised to send her little boy to guide her into the path, and to see her safely out of the woods. And this she would cause him to do on the very moment when he came home, for he was now gone after the cows. It was not three minutes' walk, she said, to one

who knew the way to the gate, and thence the path was plain. As they passed on, Crystalline bearing the sticks, the old woman quickened her steps, and putting aside the branches of the young saplings and briars without care, they flew back, and sometimes rudely brushed and scratched the face of the child.

"Never fear," said she, squeezing herself through a very close thicket, and not looking round, "this is a big wood, and has never been cut down since the beginning of the world. It is not the place for children to walk in towards evening, for it is very easy to lose your way and never get out; and there are bears, and there are wolves, and there are poison-vines, my little lady, and there are snakes, and there are robbers who prowl about, but we poor people are used to live in the woods, and are afraid of none of these things. It is not this. But woe's me!—I am so old, so helpless, I can do nothing. Here are more faggots; help me, deary, and God will certainly reward you for your pains."

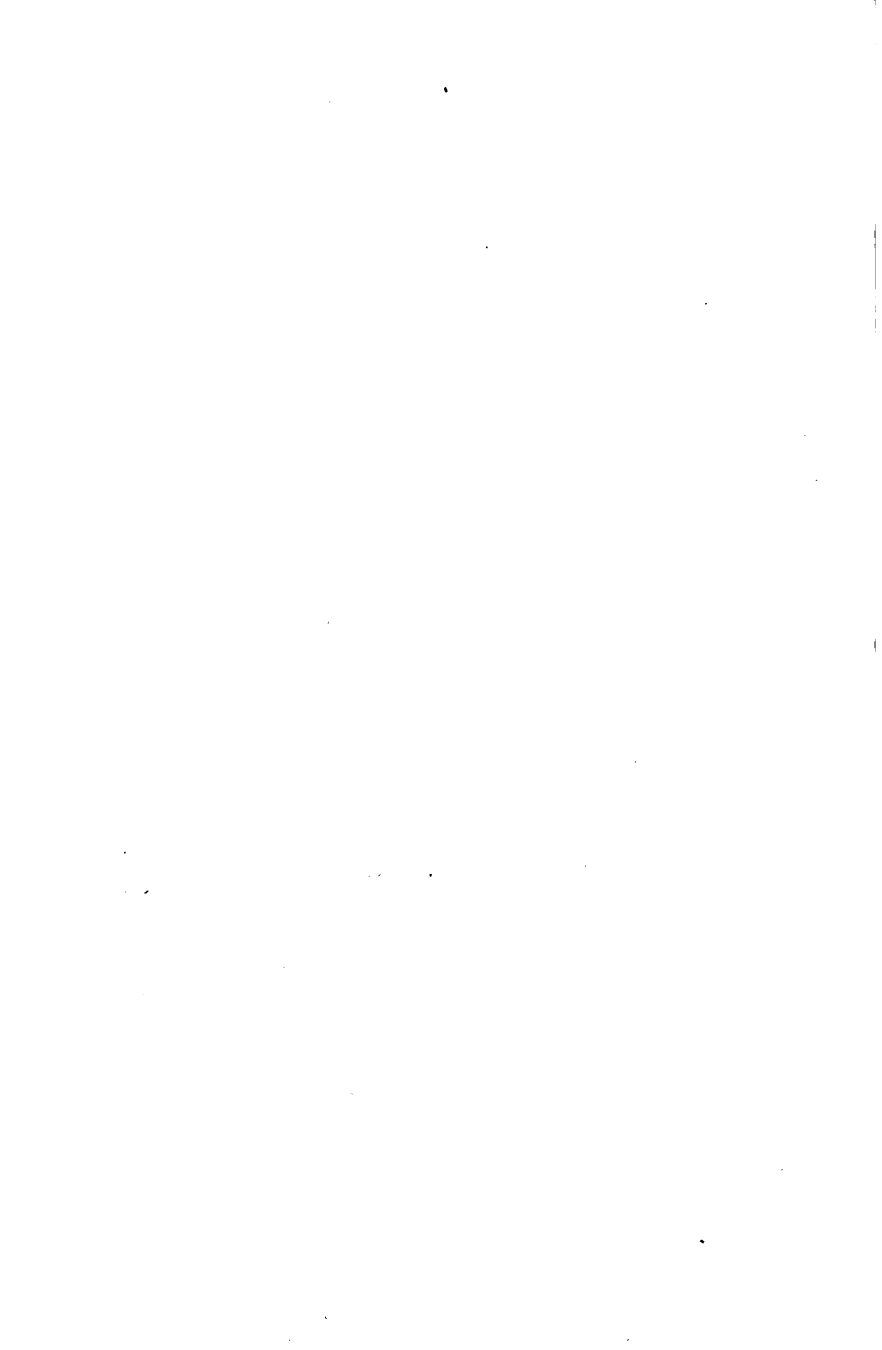
Having said this, she stooped and piled up heavier sticks upon the back of the child until it bent beneath their weight, and she herself began to look decrepid.

"Now my little one," she said, "I am going to  
(3)

walk before, and we must go faster, for I would not for the whole wide, wide world, have you left in this wood one minute after dark; for your mama would cry, and your dear papa would think that his little girl was eaten up by the bears. Now we come to the worst part of the way. See! here is a log thrown over the stream, and down to the bottom the distance is very great, and the water is very deep. Don't look down, dear, because it might make your head reel, but do as I do, and you will be soon on the other side."

So, with a remarkable speed, and with singular gestures throwing out her arms on either side, she walked the bridge. Crystalline paused upon the brink, and looked down into the gully. A scream which arose in the mountains, here rolled through the Dark Forest within a narrow bed, and its waters were as black as ink, save where they were intercepted by rocks and stumps, and the little cascades were covered with a white foam. The height of the accidental bridge was somewhat giddy, enough so to deter the unpracticed or unwary foot. The old woman shook her arm, and beckoned threateningly from the other side, crying, "quick, child!—quick, child!—the dark is coming down! Cross over or you don't get home to-night."





Crystalline reflected not another moment. She cast her eyes upon the narrow oaken causeway, dashed down the faggots at her feet, flew over with a surer step with the rapidity of lightning, and falling violently against her guide as she reached the brink, and with eyes flashing, and face beaming in the last rays of the descending sun, uplifted her finger, and said in a voice of stern command : " Go back and get your sticks, old wretch ! There, go ! go !"—and she pushed her by the shoulder upon the bridge. And she went, and picked them up, returned and laid them on the ground. Crystalline gathered them immediately in her arms, placed them on the back of the creature, and gazing in her eyes, said, " Old as you appear, you are better able to carry them than I am. Now get you to your home, and I follow you, and fear you not, though you go through a pack of wolves."

" Oh, child ! child !" exclaimed the other, stooping and crouching, but proceeding on her way, " don't be frightened because the dark is coming. We would not hurt a hair of your little head. It is not the first time that we have picked up lost children. Go up this hill, and we are soon in safety, and my son will be back with the cows. Now I see the smoke rise ; now I hear the dog

bark, and hark ! hark ! don't you hear music, sweet one ?”

She paused and Crystalline certainly heard the sounds which proceeded from a stringed instrument. It was a token to her for good, for where music is, however rude, there is an element of humanity, and hearts are not entirely vicious and bad. As she listened a moment longer she caught a few catches of a well known and familiar air.

“Go on,” she said, “I know that tune, and have played it on my own harp. It is,

‘The hearts I have won.’”

“Yes dear, it is, and you shall hear it.”

As soon as they had clambered to the top of the hill, they descended into a hollow, where a clean turf was spread beneath two walnut trees of immense size, which threw out their protecting limbs and interlocked each other. It was a place selected with some knowledge, for it was equally protected from the sun in summer, or from cold winds in winter, and surrounded by hills and briar-clad thickets on all sides, it was not subject to the frequent intrusion of roving feet.

A glance sufficed to reveal the scene disclosed

in the hollow. A few rude tents were erected, one of which was closed all round, but the others were open, showing a thick and motly population within, and in one of them upon the ground, a man lay on his back, his arms covering his face, and sound asleep. Two donkeys grazed upon the herbage, and two small covered carts stood near, out of which children peeped. There were besides, a number of other squalid children, a few women and men in variegated costume, but all clad in rags. A pile of blackened stones was built at the bottom of the hollow, and in the midst a fire over which was hung an iron kettle. As the pair descended into the narrow vale, the inhabitants flocked around, the old woman threw down the faggots on the ground, removed her hood and mantle, and rising up to full height presented the form of a man, whom Crystalline recognized as the swarthy beggar who had asked for alms at her father's gate, and she at once perceived that she stood before the Captain of an Indian band, and was in the midst of a gipsy encampment.

A sensation was immediately visible in the groups, at such an unexpected arrival, a look upon all faces such as would be exhibited among hungry hunters, when one of their number who

had been successful, suddenly arrived bringing a fine deer. At first they chatted together in a strange language to learn the incidents of the adventure, and then collected about the child. When their talk was ended, and the swarthy attendant who had been too feeble to bear the sticks, retired to poke the fire beneath the cauldron, in which was boiling water in order to prepare a concoction entitled Tea, which was already in vogue throughout Christendom, tasted by the richest and by the poorest in its different qualities alike, a real woman, the true mother of the family, welcomed the new comer.

"Oh," said she, "here is luck in the wilderness indeed. Here are pretty feathers upon a pretty bird. Why she is a little queen."

At the word, one tore off the blue riband on her bonnet, another divested her shoulders of a light scarf;—a third held up the wreath upon her arm, and another examined with a curious eye her little shoes, whilst the mother, thrusting her hand into the young girl's pocket, held up a purse filled with small silver coins, and appropriated it to herself. "Why," said she, "this is a stray bird, who has been blown away by some tempest, and has come back to her own dear little nest. She is one of our family. *Crystalline,*

and would you like to travel, child, far off to Alicant, and never see the old tower any more? You will cry a little at the first, but will soon wipe your tears. You shall tell the fortunes of fine ladies and fine gentlemen, *Crystalline*." The woman dwelt with emphasis upon the name, as if she were well acquainted with the owner.

Yet this tribe of wanderers had not passed through the village; they had but dispatched a scout daily to glean alms, and to steal, and to spy out the neighbourhood, and in a few minutes' consultation they had now changed their whole plan of operation, and on the morrow, before the peep of dawn, would retrace their steps through the forest, which extended in the rear for the distance of sixty miles, avoiding as far as possible its many broad avenues and sequestered by-paths, and going southerly by a road which was no road, yet as directly as if they journeyed by the compass, or by a star

The tinkling sounds had continued while the crone was speaking, but as the excitement spread through the camp, they ceased suddenly, the curtains of the closed tent were thrown aside, and there emerged a young girl who had been playing on a dulcimer. She was about the age of Crystalline, and to speak the

truth, was nearly of equal beauty. Her face was oval, her complexion olive, her form lithe, and her eyes were as soft and tender as the gazelle's. The moment that these young people saw each other and their eyes met, they stood silent, their souls flowed together in a mutual sympathy, like that of sisters, and they rushed into each other's arms. Their glances were exchanged, their bosoms throbbed together, and without a word spoken, a tale was told. How often in life's sad eventful intercourse are friendships closely knitted, and then the walls of separation raised, to be broken down, but in a better world. The shades of night descended fast, and the two friends separated in darkness and in tears. But they were torn apart.

"Mabel!" exclaimed the hag, and she seized a burning fagot from the flames, and beat her poor child's back, "go home!—go home!—go home!—go home!—home!—home!—home!—home!"—and the girl vanished within the tent.

Never was a heart more full of confidence, or free from fear, than at that moment the heart of Crystalline. She was even wildly gay, her eyes sparkled, her bosom beat, and she stood tall and erect in womanhood.

"Now," said the woman, "let us see what

there is in that little basket, child. Nothing but a decayed grape, and a crumb of bread. You have not earned your supper and shall not have it. No doubt you feasted at noontide near the castle, and that will last you until the break of day. At any rate, it must. Here miss, miss, I see a ring upon that slender finger which hardly seems to fit. Will you make a present of it?—Come, come!”

Crystalline clenched her hand, and beckoning to her conductor through the wood, who was standing near, she said, smiling, “Has your little boy come back with the cows? It is now time for me to return home. The moon is up. Conduct me in safety to the gate, according to your promise. But perhaps you hope to steal me away, like a helpless child. Now both of you, mark what Crystalline shall say.” And she tapped the woman on her shoulder, while her eyes darted a fierce, defiant look. Extending her right arm, and pointing with her finger aloft, she said, “Do you see yon moon? It will set in less than two hours, but before that, this whole wood will be overrun with searchers; and mark me well, if you dare to harm me, you shall be hanged upon these trees which wave above your heads.”

“Oh dearest, dearest, said the haggard lady,

taking hint from the above words, "we will treat you as kindly as if you were a lamb. Do not be afraid. Wait until to-morrow morning, and we will send you to your own papa's house. But to-night it is too late. We should be wolves in the wilderness, if we were to harm so gentle a child. And we will not do it." So saying, she rose and milked a goat in a clean pail, and bringing some white bread, gave the milk and bread to Crystalline.

Then she conducted her to a tent which was unoccupied, and lighting a taper, and pulling out from a closet a pair of exceedingly fine and clean linen sheets, she laid them on a bundle of chaff in a corner, and throwing over them a few stolen cloaks with golden clasps, which had without doubt formerly belonged to some gentlemen, she closed the curtains, and waved her an adieu for the night.

Left all alone, Crystalline said her prayers—and first she commended to God those who were already in safety, for she did not misconceive the agony which her parents would endure. When at the expected hour she did not return, a vigorous search was made. They inquired at every house for miles around, they sought to track her in her journey, and to follow in the sands the

printing of her little feet. They hunted the ruins of the castle, from its deep vaults and excavations to the tower's height, they sought her body in the neighbouring brook, but the night closed in as dark as Erebus, and she could not be found. Then her home became a scene of confusion and dismay. The house was full of people. Annette was in a raving mood, and old Mam Bess walked up and down, and wrung her hands and wept. At last the crier rang his bell, and when it was proclaimed abroad that Crystalline was missing, a hundred young men came together in the market place, and made a vow to search the forest until she should be found, for thither she had been clearly traced.

In the mean time the thieves and poachers had contrived to be upon their guard. The life they led had made them acute in perception, cautious in action, and fertile in expedient. And first they commanded a profound silence to be kept throughout the camp, and they muzzled the mouths of the donkeys, and extinguished the fires, and then lay huddled together, and daring to speak but in a whisper. In the Chamber of State Crystalline reclined. She did not sleep, but she was calm and trustful, and would patiently watch until the dawn. Neither did she feel

extremely lonesome, as she could hear the clock in the village toll the hours, and her young companion who played the dulcimer was near by. Mabel would have willingly stolen into the tent where she lay and crept to her side. But she was too strictly guarded and would be too brutally punished for the act. In this young person, brought up under such malignant auspices, there was a disposition worthy of a better fate—and when for the first time she found herself in the company of the pure and good, her affections expanded and turned thitherward as a young flower opens and bends its face toward the genial sun.

The night stole on, and once again from the turret the clock tolled. It was the hour of twelve. When the vibrations died upon the air, she heard the sound of falling water in the neighbouring brook. It was now totally dark, for by putting aside the curtains, she perceived that the moon had gone down. Folding her arms upon her breast, she again silently prayed. She thought of her father and mother only; for herself she felt as safe as if she slept in her own little chamber, in her own dear home. Her childish faith now sought its object in the hour of trial, when this great principle is truly tested, and hope, re-

cording to its intrinsic nature, revived and flourished when there seemed so little to be hoped for. "Another hour has gone by," she said ;—"let the clock strike a few times more, and the day will surely begin to dawn, and when the light shines, Crystalline will be safe."

There was a post-road going through the forest, and presently the sound of wheels, and the cry of the postillion, and the crack of his whip, announced to Crystalline that she had wandered, although lamentably, not very far. And this is true of every false step which can be taken in the world. Is it not ? Just as she was pressing to her lips in the dark a little picture, which like a true lover she always carried with her, (it might have been half an hour after the coach had passed,) she was startled by an approaching clamour in the wilderness, and she knew well that the searchers were abroad. The din waxed louder and came nearer, and the still forest was awakened at that lone hour by the sound of horns and the braying of trumpets, and the tramp of men ; and the glare of torches and lanthorns danced about and revolved quickly with great bands of light. They did not penetrate to the bottom of the dell, but they illuminated every leaf upon the adjoining tree tops. Presently she heard

her own name called frequently by many voices, and in the midst recognized the wild shrill cry of poor Annette, ringing and re-echoing above the other voices: — “Crystalline! — Crystalline! — Crystalline!”—and the answer came back from the rocks and hills, but it was only to mock the hopes of those who sought the lost. The prisoner looked out of the tent, and saw two forms standing beneath the walnut-trees, and after a moment’s consultation, they parted. One returned to the tent, the other scrambled up the hill-side, as she could hear the crackling of the dry limbs beneath his feet. It was the old woman, her guide, who went on this reconnoitring expedition, and the object was to cast down the tree which spanned the brook, because the place of the encampment was an island, and the water ringed it about as if with the coil of a snake.

Oh! how Crystalline longed to return an answer to the cry which was made for her, but it would have been to no purpose, and she held her peace, expecting presently that some of the party would ford the stream, and come down into the glen. But they only strayed on the other of the bank, and their lanthorns glared fitfully upon the dark water. As she listened with a quick ear,

the curtains of the tent were silently withdrawn, and the queen mother, the old hag, glided cautiously in. She lit a little taper which shed a light as if a spider's thread had been enkindled upon the summit of a fine needle, and this she shaded with the hollow of her hand. She approached the bedside of Crystalline, and putting her face close down perceived her to be wide awake.

“ Little ladies may sometimes be the cause of a great racket,” she whispered with remarkable coolness. “ My child, just press open the curtains which are near you, and look out, and perhaps if it is not too dark, you will observe a pile of brushwood. There is a little cat there, and a little dog there, who learned to bark too loud, and they are both covered up. Now wait till I show you something which may do your heart good. Hush!—don't stir! See, I will put this little taper here, which is sick and won't burn, but lest the little taper should die, I will cover it with this pretty hood. Now wait only for one minute, do not move,” she said, shaking her finger, and thrusting her hand in her pocket, she drew forth a bunch of keys, and applying one of them to a small closet, she opened the lid, and took therefrom a fine silver chain, one end of which she

fastened to a loop or hook in her waist, and from the other end Crystalline saw suspended a dirk or dagger sheathed in a silver scabbard. It might have been no larger than a bodkin.

"Now," said she approaching, and holding the taper in her hand, "if you make any noise, I will stab you, and cover you up in those sticks, and when your papa's friends come we shall be all sound asleep, and no Crystalline to be found."

"Woman," said Crystalline, smiling upon her with calm and wakeful eyes, "you dare not do it; for before to-morrow morning the blood-hounds will be after you, and you never can get out of this wood."

"Ah, no, no, no, child—the danger is all past. The hunters have gone away, and you shall go to sleep." So saying she imprinted a kiss upon her forehead, extinguished the light, and went out of the tent.

Crystalline covered up her face, and tried to compose herself to sleep, but again and again she heard the clock strike the hours, and still in the far distance she could distinguish the clamour of voices, and the sound of horns.

At last she heard her own name faintly breathed almost at her very ear, and a pair of arms were stretched over her, and her pillow was wetted.





It was Mabel, it was Mabel, her little gipsey friend, as she thought, who had come to console her in her distress. "Oh, Crystalline! Crystalline! is it you, darling? Your poor parents are distracted. We have been seeking you the whole night. Come home, come home. The other people are out of sight, but I have crossed the brook and found you." "Annette, Annette," cried Crystalline, drawing down the poor girl, who was dripping wet from having waded the stream, and folding her in her arms, "say not a single word. Go back and tell my parents that I am safe, and will return to-morrow. Good night, Annette." She retreated silently, and without observation, as she came.

At break of day there was a stir in the camp. The donkeys were harnessed, and the little carts or waggons were packed with the furniture and utensils of the restless tribe. The fire was kindled and the herb called tea was again brought into requisition, for these people could not do without it at morning, noon or night. But the loutish men who accompanied the caravan, imbibed also much spirituous liquors. In this taste they would be gratified even at the expense of bread. Crystalline looked out, and saw that the other tents were taken down, and there was a

preparation for a meal going on, and symptoms of moving, but she was not for the present disturbed. The inhabitants of the glen were grouped about the fire, for the morning was chill and the ground covered with dew. She perceived Mabel standing apart, her eyes cast upon the ground. At last she was warned to be up and stirring, the tent above her head was torn down, and all which it contained crammed away in the twinkling of an eye.

The goat was milked, some bread was placed before her and she was told to break her fast which she did cheerfully. The birds were already singing upon the trees, the morning air revived her, her spirits were elastic, and she was conscious that succour must be near at hand. The first thing which the gipsies did when they were ready to depart, was to convey the stones on which the fire had been kindled, into the bushes, and to turn the blackened part down, and they destroyed by every means in their power the vestiges of their sojournings. But this work, in spite of all their efforts, could not be thoroughly done. The grass was trampled down, and the ruts of the wheels, though slight, remained, and the turf too retained an accurate memory of the donkey's hoofs. There was also a little charcoal

left behind, and here and there some straw and provender. Where the tents had been pitched there was a mark left, and although they had only been there for three days, it would have been a year's job to destroy the signs of that encampment. It is easier to make a mark than to erase it. Having arrived at the stream, the party found an easy fording-place, and passed over. Then they trudged on through brambles and briars at a snail's pace, setting their faces towards Alicant, a hundred leagues off, they said. Crystalline reclined pleasantly amidst a quantity of rags in the foremost wagon, and the sun had scarcely risen before, in spite of herself, she fell into a profound sleep. What wonder as she had been so long without repose? When she awoke it was past midday, and as she rubbed her eyes she could scarcely realize the situation in which she was. Mabel, with permission, jumped into the wagon and embraced her. Poor Mabel, who could have no idea but that the fate of her new companion was irrevocable, vainly thought that she had obtained a perpetual associate and friend. She discoursed with her as if their intimacy were already cemented and fixed, and as they passed along she pointed out the nests of hanging birds, and said that she was told that after

they had travelled a few days farther, the nightingales would be heard all night, and she tried to comfort her in her sorrow, and although she was taken away from her home Mabel would always be a friend to her. Crystalline smiled, and pressed her hand, and loved her for her tenderness, and gave her a little gift; but she had no idea that their companionship should long continue, or that they should travel together as far as Alicant. When through thickets and brambles they had gone a great distance in a direct line, so the chief of the party declared, they suddenly came to a stand-still. All the tactics and engineering of the vagabonds could not obviate the necessity of at least crossing the post road—an operation which a snake would not perform without prevision for fear of a passing wheel. The little army in which Crystalline was enlisted usually laid their plans for such a transit with as much skill as if they had to pass over a river, especially when their passports were not properly signed, when their goods and chattels comprised contraband articles, or when they had a stolen lamb or something of that kind in possession. They were an aristocratic set, and would not, except under unavoidable circumstances, even condescend to converse with officers of State.

They sent the young man Blaise, a scion of their noble family, in advance, to trot up and down the road and to report whether he heard carriage wheels. He returned and said that the coast was clear. "Did he put his ear down to the ground and hearken for the sound of hoofs?" "Yes, and he could detect nothing."

"Well," said the Capitano, "Blaise, where is your knife?"

The young man drew forth a rough piece of bone, and when the Captain had touched a spring and made the blade to fly out, he cut and trimmed a twig, and put it in the hands of Blaise.

"Where is the hatchet?" said he, addressing himself in a gruff voice to the woman. "Come please to stir yourself, for we don't expect to stay here all day."

The hatchet was forthcoming. He took it in his own hands, and crossing the road began to hack down the saplings and branches on the other side, and to clear the way.

"Now," said he returning, "all is clear; we are to shoot the donkeys over that road: What is done must be done quickly. Afterward we shall go on for an hour to Catbriar hollow, send the youngest to Mid-Summer-Cottage for a chicken, take supper and camp out for the night. Now"

At the word Blaise applied his stick to the foremost donkey, and with renovated speed the procession moved on. They had just got into the thick bushes on the opposite side of the road, where they were embowered on every hand when the quick ear of Crystalline detected the tramp produced by the hoofs of a galloping horse. She was the first discoverer in this instance, and leaping from the side of Mabel, she fled with the agility of a deer, stood upon the trunk of a fallen tree, and waving her 'kerchief just as a knight errant appeared in sight, "What ho!" she shrieked with a piercing voice which penetrated the grove, "help! help! Sir Knight." The swarthy faces were after her in a moment, but retreated instantly to their wagons. It was too late. The bird had flown.

Reining up his steed the moment that he caught sight of a young girl who implored for succour, this gentleman, who was alone, alighted, and without waiting for much explanation, because he perceived that he might be overpowered, he lifted his fair burden before him on the saddle and by the mane and stirrup swinging himself into the seat, dashed onward. Crystalline had as yet caught but a glance of his countenance, but it revived former impressions, it awakened

memories—yet notwithstanding all her effort, she was unable to recal where she had seen that face before.

Held firmly in her place she was carried swiftly along the avenue which intersected the Dark Forest. The trees appeared to dance round and round in her path, and she was so full of conflicting thoughts that she had said not a word, when the tower of the castle began to be visible through the wood, and they arrived at the high gate which a labourer passing at that moment was so kind as to open. When the landscape burst again upon her eyes she felt as if she had been upon a long journey, and had just returned to the scenes of her childhood. Her eyes filled with tears, and as she approached her father's house, she was overpowered in a tumult of emotions, and now and then she wondered who could be the brave Knight who had rescued her from danger, and she thought of the warm welcome and gratitude which he would receive. The people saw her as she was carried by, and the rumour passed from house to house that Crystalline was safe. And now she arrived at her father's door, alighted upon the ground, threw herself into the midst of the group, who rushed out to meet her, but when the excitement of the moment had passed over,

and she turned to her deliverer, alas! he had put spurs to his steed, and galloped furiously away.

That night she started many times from her sleep. The scenes and incidents which she had passed through were again presented with all their vividness of reality but mingled with others the most remote and shapeless in all the wild and chaotic inconsistency of a dream. As last when she awoke and became convinced that she was in her own chamber, and under her parent's roof, she brushed away the unpleasant tissue which her brain had woven and felt in all its fulness, the sweetness, and security of home.

It was an object of much anxiety to her parents to find out the person who had rendered such timely aid. Days passed away and no new light was shed. He had disappeared as suddenly as he came, nor could anything but the traces of his horse's hoofs be found in the whole neighbourhood. Other matters however more painful than the preceding were soon evolved, which have to do with this history. This young creature, so retiring, so modest, was brought into a notoriety the most distressing, and made so much a gazing stock that she seldom went abroad, or if so closely veiled. She became more reserved and silent,

the tears often stole down her cheeks unnoticed, and a sentiment almost like that of disgrace possessed her from having been made the subject of this untoward event. For a time she wilted like a flower which has been torn up by the roots, and then restored with greater carefulness to its native soil.

If she ventured at a little distance from her home she returned still more depressed, for a vague and ominous shadow of evil seemed hovering in the air. A dreamy sense of something undefined and undefinable weighed down her spirits, and communicated itself to those near her. There is often a trembling anxiety among the little birds before the hawk swoops down, or the vulture appears in sight. It may appear strange why safety should result in danger, or why a sudden joy should so soon again border upon fear. A presentiment which might be deemed at first superstitious, became at last rational, because a just cause was found. It did not spring from nothing. A great many faces, usually blank, beamed out with an expression of some inward knowledge, or at least suspicion, accompanied by an ominous silence far worse than the wagging of tongues. A curiosity blended with incredulousness was also visible where nothing but open looks had

formerly been met. Could any one declare what strange things had come to pass in the vicinity of Fall Down Castle? No. If you made inquiry all lips were sealed. But the effect which had been produced upon the community was just this.

Supposing that at some time during the night a light snow had covered the surface of the ground, and made it white. Toward morning before it is melted, some one going abroad to see the sun rise discovers great foot-prints unlike those of any living thing. They are defined clearly, and distant from one another by the length of enormous strides, and can be traced far and wide. Where the snows have been blown away the sands mould them, and they are even chiselled in the adamantine rocks. What produced them? For the time being, it is merely whispered that the Devil has gone by, but nobody is bold or sagacious enough to track him to his den. He had, however, leaped the enclosures of high parks, he had planted his hoofs deep by the thresholds of the meanest cottage; he had crossed streams, and overleaped ditches; he had literally destroyed the bloom of the most cultivated garden; he may be tracked every where and can be found no where.

Oh that Hilario, that good friend of the family were present, but he was by this time far out at sea, on his way to Jerusalem and the Holy Sepulchre. Oh, that the valiant Knight would return who had so suddenly appeared in the forest, but he had strangely disappeared. Nay, the very band which assembled for the rescue, had been dissolved, and nothing was left behind, but foot-marks of the Devil.

Crystalline wept, and the strength which she had so lately exhibited beyond her years became relaxed to an infantine weakness. The worst fears of her parents revived, for her conduct was unexplainable, and they did not permit Annette to approach her. The severe shock and suffering which she had undergone, they thought had proved too much for her fragile frame, and that she would die, or sink into hopeless imbecility. But let it not be supposed, that besides this they suspected nothing. In a very few days, they changed their opinion and wore the anxious faces of those who were attempting to probe some deep mystery.

Having gone one day to the tower, Crystalline to her surprise, perceived that her little cabinet had been broken open, and a few things of no value removed. There were also other symptoms

that intruders had been present. Descending the stairs to the second landing, she called in a clear and distinct voice, "Rudolph." Rudolph answered, but looked serious, and disconcerted.

"Rudolph," she said, "who has entered into the upper chamber during my absence?"

"Oh my lady, be assured it is none of our doing. We were unable to prevent it. We refused the key at first, but the stranger, who was a fierce man, declared to us that we acted at our peril. He inspected all the apartment, and went out, saying nothing."

When Sir Ralph was informed of this, he was filled with an ungovernable rage, he perceived that danger was brewing, and mounting a swift steed, he rode forth to chase the footsteps of the Devil. Arriving at a lodge he did not wait for an old woman to creep out and open the gate; he descended, and pushing the somewhat ponderous portals with his foot, remounted, and rode up the avenue. When he arrived at the Count's houses, which was a bastard castellation, abounding in mean abutments and two-penny loop-holes, he made a vigorous demand for admittance, but no admittance was to be had. The inmates were all dead, or sleeping. If there were any

faces peering upon him they were behind curtains in an upper chamber. At last a servant appeared, who said that the Count had been gone an hour, but he was expected to return presently; and at that very moment the sound of a horse's feet was heard. Happily however the person who approached was not the Count; it was a messenger in hot haste who had followed the steps of Sir Ralph, and who informed him that his presence was required immediately at his own house. He put spurs to his horse, and returned as speedily as he came. Had he met the object of his search perhaps a different turn would have been given to this history.

Now who is able to divine what the trouble was in question? After Crystalline had returned from her adventure it was rumoured that she had been in the company of a very handsome knight. Who was he? On what errand had he come? Whither was he going? She did not know herself, and in vain did curiosity tease and tantalize itself upon this subject, for no traces of him could be found. Among the inhabitants of Valrosarm, the ball itself was lost sight of in a mystery so profound. When, however, the knowing ones had put themselves to the torture, and could extract no answer, they might have devised

some romantic love-tale as an explanation, or something worse. This however, was not done, nor was any suspicion whispered abroad among the neighbouring gentry that a splendid cavalier had been fascinated by the charms of the heiress of Fall Down Castle, or would involve himself in so preposterous a scrape.

But might it not be possible? Such was in fact the report which went around, that some people who affected to be stolen, were themselves thieves. Might not a little girl of very innocent aspect, be in league with poachers and robbers, and strive to build up a down-fallen castle by the most deceptive arts? One thing was very certain, that various articles of value had been missing, and no trace of them had been found, until a ring of costliest value was seen to sparkle on the hand of one to whom it did not belong. No matter how meekly the present possessor might kneel at the altar, go abroad upon errands of charity, or confess her sins. It was beyond doubt that she wore a diamond ring upon her finger, and Violante, who had long missed it, declared that ring to be hers.

When Sir Ralph returned he found his whole household turned topsy-turvy. An officer had come there, presented his seals, credentials, and

unquestionable warrant, and before it could be well realized what had taken place, Crystalline had been torn away, and conveyed to prison. She was charged with having stolen a ring, and according to the strict and severe justice which prevailed within the dominions of the Golden Duke, if convicted of that crime, she would be sentenced to death. The law was immutable, and though she were the daughter of the Duke himself, if proved guilty, the punishment would be sure. It was in vain that any sought to go with her. This privilege could not be allowed; but before she parted from her parents, she smiled upon them from her beaming eyes, with an expression most victorious and beautiful. Never had a more gloomy night closed upon the poor ruined castle. "Alas! alas!" said Sir Ralph, "see what it is to be deprived of influence and power. Had I my castle and estate—"

"Nay, nay," replied the wife, "there is a strength and majesty in Innocence superior to that."

Thus the doors were bolted to protect an empty house, and they were again left childless, and alone.

Oh, it was a gloomy prison in which they shut up poor Crystalline. It had been built for ages,

and being on the edge of a moat, it seemed as if the green scum extended, like a tracery in the crevices of the walls, were an accumulation of the guilt which had been collected so long. The sombre architecture of the stone building, corresponded with its design. The massive portals, and the guard who all night and all day patrolled before the gate, the grated windows, and the beam of the gallows, which could be descried above the walls, gave it an awful significance to the by-passer, especially to the one who deserved to be housed therein. There it stood, and there it would stand, for it was as substantial as by stone and iron it could be made. It was in an upper chamber of this building, and by a tender gaolor, that Crystalline was placed. He brought in a jug of water, and having lighted a rough twist of tow which was deposited in a shallow vase of oil, and cast his eye about the cell to see that the couch was properly provided, he pulled his cap over his eyes, and retired respectfully, turning the great bolt.

Crystalline slept. I must not forget to mention one incident, and you may attach to it what consequence you please. In her pleasant dreaming that night, she listened to a thrumming sound, a monotone continued long, accompanied by a

low sweet voice, an air soon closed, and repeated with the greatest perseverance, again and again. Awaking, she still heard it, and tried to catch it in the hollow of her hand, as she leaned upon her elbow, just as a fisherman's boy would hearken in a sea shell, to that gurgling melody which is so like the memory of winds and waves :

"This is a dream," she said, smiling, "I surely hear music. It is Mabel, with her dulcimer again."

●

She arose speedily. The taper flickered in the nearly exhausted oil. She looked out of the window, but did not see the form of Mabel, who was journeying towards Alicant. In the outer court of the prison, she beheld a little fair-haired boy, whose brow was surrounded by a slight halo, fingering a harp, casting his bright eyes upward, and ever and ever with the most persevering endeavour, recurring to the same melody again.

"It is Ralph, Ralph ; it is my brother," she exclaimed, in an extacy of delight thrusting her white arm through the gates, and waving it towards him. Scarcely had she spoken, when the music ceased, the form faded away, and falling back upon her pillow she sobbed herself to sleep. When she awoke in the morning she questioned

herself whether she dreamed that she had dreamed.

Oh, what a tremour pervaded the people of Valrosarum, when they knew what had taken place. Those footprints of the Devil were already wiped out, and effaced by a flood of sympathy which rolled from every heart. The devisers of mischief trembled in their strong places, while she who had lost the ring would have relinquished all her jewelry, if she could undo the mischief which was now past reprieve. How powerful is the meanest agent to quell a storm of ruin, but how unable to withstand the reflux of the tide! The captive in her cell was secure in an innocence which was stronger than bolts, and bars, and bands, and keys. Those who had unconsciously been the agents in this matter, were alarmed at what they had done. They did not know before that a little weight of detraction availed much when attached to a long lever, according to moral and mechanic laws, which are the same. There were a thousand people who in the fury of their indignation, had a disposition to raze that prison to the ground; and they would have done so, but they quailed before the form of a majesty which was able to vindicate itself.

Some time after the events narrated, and while the trial was pending, the Knight of Fall Down Castle received a letter from his friend Hilario, who was far advanced on his journey, for he was a great wanderer and had fought in the wars of the Sultan, and had visited the many Isles and Royalties which had belonged to the real estate of Prester John. He had crossed and recrossed seas, followed in the track of caravans through burning deserts, walked between the pure blue streams where it was thought the garden of Eden once bloomed, was at home in Tartary and Thibet, had seen the Llama, and been permitted, as an especial grace, to approach within ten leagues of the Emperor of China, the greatest man in his estimation on the whole globe, and to converse familiarly with an officer of the fourth degree. And he had journeyed all through the Indian Ocean, from the Straits of Malacca to Ceylon, the Coralline Isles and the Ethiopian Archipelago, back to Adel and Abyssinia on the coasts of the Red Sea, and so on to his good friend, the Emperor of Morocco. He was a man whom few understood except those who knew him, and he permitted few to know him. It was not a restless disposition or a love of spectacle and adventure which induced him to roam con-

stantly; it was rather a broken heart, and sympathies too keen and tender for common fellowship. He was no misanthrope, which he would have been had he remained at home. The mass of Humanity, though often agitated by the storms of passions and rendered turbid on the shoals of self-interest, is preserved and rendered sweet by the salt of the whole earth; but when you come to isolated individuals, it is like looking on a drop or pool of water, full of crawling insects, and where all is stagnant and corrupt.

From Constantinople he addressed a letter to his friend, of which these are a part of the contents :—

“ You will give Hilario’s love and a kiss withal to his dear god-child. Should we ever meet again, may it be under auguries the most happy, and if a tear of sorrow shall bedim the eye of Crystalline, may it be absorbed by Heaven’s smile, while sunshine and gladness shall alone follow in the path of the beautiful and good. So prays your ancient and true friend,

HILARIO.”

It was on a dull and sombre evening that this missive was received; and although scarce legible, because it had passed through many hands, and

been clipt and fumigated in regions where the plague reigned, it conveyed its meaning, and shot a thrill of pleasure through the hearts of those for whom it had been written. Though it had been dated far back, and had travelled a long distance, it annihilated space, and was like a flash of recognition from the eye of a true friend. Over and over again it was perused, and was communicated in substance to the whole household, and it was wafted and wafted, at least in many a wish, toward the cell, which for the present was irrevokably sealed. Neither the knight or his wife had for the first moment doubted that all would be well; they even anticipated a signal triumph, and slept in peace.

The imprisonment of Crystalline was but a three days' wonder, and presently the thoughts of the great folks began to hover about the engrossing subject of the grand ball, which was to come off in honour of the Prince of Calos, whose arrival was expected about the time that the Court of Chancery should be convened. At least for once in an age the people of the dull little town would have something to excite them. The Golden Duke, either in person or by one of his family, visited every part of his realm once in a hundred years. This was the hundredth year,

and, on mature reflection, he had decided not to go himself, but to send the Prince, his eldest son. This representative no doubt answered every purpose, and would perhaps be more acceptable to the people than the Duke himself. Moreover he was young, and said to be endowed with all those charms of mind and graces of person which would make him captivating to either sex. Some of the young people were dying to behold him when they should vie with rivalling graces to win a look, a smile. What a multitude of questions were asked about the prince of Calos! Was he tall, or of middling height? Was he fair complexioned or was he dark? Was he affable or reserved? And was he, as report said, the most beautiful of all the neighbouring princes? The enigma would be soon solved. Oh, the ball! the ball! Violante's whole heart was set upon it, and she had purchased for the occasion a tiara of precious jewels whose cost almost surpassed belief, and she had surveyed herself every day in a tall mirror until she knew her own countenance by heart, and she had scraped her teeth with charcoal, until, although not very even, they had become as white as snow. Yes, and she had almost starved herself, that the might look more sylph-like, and she had squeezed her waist into a zone

so tight that she could scarcely breathe. With such ingenious witchery did she weave the net which was to catch the Prince of Calos.

And did none beside her own kindred, and the pensioners of her bounty, think of Crystalline? Did no one come into her gloomy prison-house to cheer her heart, and had she no companions of her solitude? Alas! the guards were set about the stronghold of the Valrosarum, and the gaoler could but do his duty. But she had friends enough who gained admittance; mysterious messengers, who came and went, yet gave no watchword. They crossed the threshold as if no guard were there, and though they held no golden bribe within their palms, with magic influence passed the gates, while locks and bolts flew back to give them entrance. Oh, they were the resolute thoughts which knew no keepers; the conscientious guests which wait upon a heart of rectitude; sweet hopes without delusion, past memories wafted back with incense from the realms of youth, insights of future bliss, and hovering over all the white robed form of childish innocence. These soothed the pangs of Crystalline, while ever and anon in the dark watches of the night there came with swift repeat, in constant monotone, that same seraphic music which she

had heard before. Oh, Ralph! Ralph!—His golden ringlets flowed upon his shoulders, swayed by the breeze of night. His harp stood by him on its golden pedestal, and as he twined his airy fingers round the strings, and sang with all his heart, it seemed as if a gush of heavenly music poured through the portals of the Spirit Land.

In all of this, it is very true, there was no mystery which might not be unravelled. But some things not only filled with delight, but really puzzled the heiress of Fall Down Castle. A singing bird with yellow wings, flew through the bars of her prison, and insisted upon sharing her captivity. It nestled in her bosom, it perched upon her shoulder, and trilled its song into her very ear. It would have been a most welcome visitant, as it was a harbinger of good. But there was a reason why she brushed away the little stranger as if it had been a beetle or a stinging wasp. Neither her eyes nor ears deceived her, but she was certain that she had seen that very bird on a summer morning hung up in a cage beneath the chamber window of Violante, and she feared the reputation of being a still more dexterous thief, and of being in league with jail-birds. While she thought of this, a still small voice seemed to whisper in her ear, "Do you not per-

ceive that these wings are yellow, and like molten gold? It is not this colour which has deceived you; nor must you confound a harsher voice with the music of Canary. Beware of the *blue wings*, Crystalline!" At that moment the bird hopped upon her finger, and sang a most delicious lay, and she cared not where it came from, but fed it with crumbs of bread which had been left from her last meal, while it twittered and its wings trembled with a soft motion. But a greater mystery than this perplexed her, for her life began to abound in mysteries which she could not explain. Every day a bunch of fresh roses was thrust through the bars of her cell, all plumply budding and wet, as they appeared to be, with the dews of the morning. Those dews were tears. When the gaoler was questioned, he could give no account of them, but there they stood and bloomed in a little pitcher, as vigorously as if they grew from the soil of a garden. Some hand had carefully removed each thorn.

Among those who felt most keenly for the little prisoner, were two persons not at all connected with her, who had merely seen her, but who had learned to love her at a glance. The name of the first shall not be mentioned for espe-

cial reasons, but the other was poor Mabel, no doubt by this time far on her way towards Alicante. When this swarthy child was far separated from the companions of a few hours, and jogged onward in the little wagon through the woods alone, it appeared as if her heart-strings were broken, and she could not realize that a separation had taken place. In vain she reclined upon the soft rags, and looked upward at the moon which glistened upon the trees of the wood, and had her mind distracted by the noise of travel, she recurred constantly to her bright-eyed companion whom she had embraced in the wood.

When we consider that many are from the very cradle moulded forcibly in the ways of vice, almost deprived of any power of moral agents, how much allowance should be made for guilt ; and yet in spite of all, the good will oft predominate, and with the heart and vigour of a native germ will blossom freely in a melancholy waste. But others trained with utmost care, beneath the very shadows of the Cross, within the sound of Sunday chimes, and in the reach of every holy influence, have feet which swiftly go astray, and seem already damned by a proclivity of evil. This mystery is deep, but will be solved, when we are taught to know how all things in God's

wise majestic Providence do ultimately work for good.

Crystalline looked through the bars wistfully one morning, and out of the window of her museum in the distant tower saw a white flag waving, and shaken violently by the hand as if for signal. She could very distinctly discover it, although she knew not what it meant. There was another prisoner in that tower, and the door was barred, while the farmer below stairs acted as gaoler. Annette was very wild, and her shrieks could be heard far and wide, while she perpetually waved her kerchief. Fall Down Castle looked more ruined and desolate than before.

Slowly and tediously the hours creep on for those who only wait the signal to leap towards a desired goal, and Time becomes a luggard, while Hope is sighing for its object, and Honour longs to be avenged.

At last the great bell tolled on the turret, and all through the Valrosarum its echoes came to the ears of the people like a funeral knell. It announced that the doors of the Hall of Justice were thrown open, and the High Court was sitting. An excitement was manifest in the whole place, and a movement of the peoples which resembled that of some market day.

There was but one Court in the dominions of the Golden Duke, which tried all cases, small and great, from the most petty thievery to the rankest treason or murder in the first degree. It was very differently constituted from courts now-a-days, yet it subserved the ends of justice well. The accuracy of its decisions for ages had rendered it august and unimpeachable, and though it had condemned many to death, in no case did it appear from after-knowledge that the innocent had suffered, nor was the white flag ever waved above their graves. The wings of a sombre majesty overshadowed this tribunal, whose records were very old, and extended back through the times of many reigning Dukes. But it was astonishing with what expedition was despatched the long list of cases on the docket. A matter of trivial importance was decided infallibly in the twinkling of an eye, and all parties went away satisfied ;—and as to paramount claims, they were not postponed from spring to autumn, and from autumn until the next summer, so that a second or third generation must wait for a tardy justice to be fulfilled. There was no such legal mockery in Valrosarum ; nor was there any appeal or reference to fritter away time, to worry out the suppliant and make the just award come so late

as to be of no value. For it was held that no judge was fitted to sit upon a bench at all whose judgment might be appealed from.

Now this was a Court of Chancery, or Equity, and made no distinction in cases at all, because it held that a principle of equal sublimity was involved, whether a pin was stolen or whether the most sacred rights were wrenched away. If the Lord Chancellor made a mistake, it was indeed deplorable and without remedy; although he was selected for the virtues of twelve ordinary men, there was never wanting at least one to fill the office. So great a dignity at first requires, but afterwards creates, virtue in the person on whom it rests. At any rate no one had as yet given a shock to this legal system, and still the Areopagus survived, and the ermine of its judges was unsullied as the snow which has lately fallen.

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The crier cried aloud—"Hear ye, hear ye, any person having business before the Court, let them prefer their requests and they shall now be heard. God save the Golden Duke!" and the crowd collected in the beautiful Hall of Justice, whose galleries were supported all round the oval space by porphyry columns, and high upon a tribune approached by many steps, was placed an ivory

chair beneath a crimson canopy. The light came in not sideways, but through the dome direct from heaven, and emblematic fell in soft illumination around the Judge's brow. No sculptured Justice stood within the hall or vestibule, upholding equal scales, released from out a block of Parian marble; but if the form were wanting, the pervading spirit sanctified the place. There no head was covered, and not a foot-fall sounded in the corridors. An utter and impressive silence was observed. Nor was it changed to a buzz, or murmur, but rather to a more death-like solemnity, when the outer doors were thrown wide open, and dressed in robes of purest whiteness, Crystalline advanced. She was conducted to a low dais near the platform on which the Lord Chancellor was seated. Her complexion was more clear and transparent than ever, her eyes sparkled with an almost unearthly brilliance, and without gazing boldly, commanded with a sweeping ray all the assembly, who remained riveted like those who are watching a serene star.

"Very much she resembles a thief!" whispered a handsome Cavalier to himself. "She has stolen nothing but the hearts of those who have looked at her. Heaven will yet be peopled with such thieves."

"A thief indeed!" whispered the poor women who came there in the weeds of mourning. With difficulty they withheld their murmurs, but they could not restrain their tears, which fell softly on the marble pavement of the Grand Hall of Justice.

The indictment contained a single count, and set forth that the accused was found in possession of a diamond ring of costly value, which had been long missing and which belonged to another, but if this charge were proved, the loss of much property which had been involved in mystery would be explained. The ladies said that there was surely some lithe and light fingered thief in the neighbourhood, for one had lost a golden thimble, and another a silver arrow, and a third some gift more precious to her than its intrinsic value. A few whose natures were suspicious and who reversed the true and generous rule of judging, always ready to presume guilt until a negative innocence should admit of proof, remarked that no appearance was apt to be more deceitful than that of the guileless beauty exhibited by the prisoner at the bar. They were full of precedents to show that no one can be safely trusted. The world is bad enough, but as it grows older how much harder and more intolerable would its

lot become if every one outgrew his childish faith in that which seems to be. Better to think each erring soul a saint until the damning blots have fallen which tears can not bleach out:

The Court without delay commanded the shining property to be identified, that it might grace a rightful, honest finger. Precious bauble! the diamond has no soul, but though brought forth and chrystallized in darkness, it is more lustrous than an eagle's eye when it is made to face the sun.

Violante was too sensitive and delicately minded to appear on this occasion in person, and she was ill moreover with a severe headache. She sent her deposition in writing, and her maid-servant to testify in the case, but if need be she could obtain a score of witnesses. She wished the restoration of the property, and not the conviction of the "poor thing," who had suffered too much already, and at whose unhappy position she was greatly pained. This was very kind and thoughtful as some observed, in Violante, but the Lord Chancellor did not even deign to glance at the deposition, which was written in a fair hand, and neatly sealed. He put it from him, and in a stern voice commanded the accuser to be brought directly into Court. This was no more than strict

justice. It is scarce right that one who has the power to put life at stake and character in jeopardy should be permitted to stand aloof in elegant privacy, while the other party is dragged before the unflinching gaze of the whole world. Yet some are so timid as to shrink from the responsibility which they have courted, and do not wish their own names however insignificant to be exposed. But those should not convene a court who cannot face the judge, and wait for retribution.

With burning cheeks and eyes inflamed Violante arrived, leaning on the arm of the Count her father, casting a contemptuous and angry look toward the little prisoner who had exposed her to the indignity of being brought into Court. In vain she had stamped her foot and declared that she would not stir an inch to bear witness against a thief, and that never had her feelings been so outraged. She dared not to disobey the mandate of the judge, for such conduct would have consigned her to one of the darkest cells in the prison of Valrosarum. She therefore yielded with a sorry grace, by the assistance of a smelling bottle, her head aching as it was, and when she came exactly opposite to the accused and met her smiling and steady glance her own eyes fell like lead-

en bullets to the earth. The proud imperious girl began to tremble, the colour left her cheeks, and in a moment after she sank in all her robustness, fainting at the feet of Crystalline. The latter gazed down wistfully upon her as one who contemplates a dead foe.

Great stir and sympathy was excited among her immediate friends for the prostrate beauty, but pungent odours and assiduous fanning brought her to her senses. With high lady's airs she submitted to the odious forms of questioning, and when the witnesses whom she had brought with her had been likewise examined, she drew her veil over her face, seized the arm of the Count, her father, and bursting into a flood of petulant tears withdrew. The identification of the property was complete. But the mere fact of its being found in the hands of another did not yet establish as true that it was stolen. Crystalline was therefore called upon by the Judge to account for the manner by which it came into her possession. She smiled naively and merely said, "My Lord, it fell down at my feet from Heaven." A murmur of disappointment ran through the assembly at an answer so unsatisfactory and unexpected. The same question was repeated, and she replied,—“My Lord, it fell down at my feet

from Heaven." The judge shook his head. "Ah," said the suspecting ones, "Heaven is not quite so prodigal of jewels. They come out of the earth." "You surely will not cling," said the examiner, after he had paused a while, "to so improbable a story. It sweeps away the fair appearance of your innocence, and carries condemnation with it. Reflect once more"—it was the custom of this court to question an accused party—"reflect again, and state the entire truth, and every circumstance," but Crystalline repeated once again with sharp persistence, "My Lord, it fell down at my feet from Heaven." Folding her arms upon her breast she gazed steadily into vacant space, and as her eyes were fixed and glowing, and she murmured something of "the little people! the little people!" an explanation of the mystery seemed to dawn, a hint of madness which though less than infamy, is worse than death. The old nurse who had been seated near her rose suddenly, and bursting into tears flung her arms wildly around the neck of Crystalline, and sobbed aloud, "Oh child!—speak!—speak!—do not thus break our hearts. Tell how you found it, dear. You must know who gave it to you, where you got it. Oh, do speak, but a single word and you will be saved."

The girl with gentle violence put her away.

"Oh my Lord, my Lord," cried the old creature, "do not murder an innocent like this," and extending her bony arm, and pointing with her finger in the air, exclaimed aloud, "She would no more steal than an angel in the skies."

An officer immediately conducted her from the court because she had dared in such a manner to address the right honourable judge.

"Has the prisoner no counsel?" inquired the latter, "who will advance something in explanation or defence? Has she no witness who will shed light on the matter?" Crystalline had committed to no one the mode by which she obtained the treasure, unless it might be to Maud the widow, or unless she had made a confidant of her brother Ralph and the little people. Neither she, nor her parents, seemed to regard the necessity of counsel, but they had sure confidence that Heaven itself would interpose to protect the right, while the only witness which she brought with her was that of a clear conscience, so that she replied simply, "No, my Lord."

"Will you confess that in an evil hour, in ignorance of the law and of its penalty, you took the ring? Your tender age may stand in mitigation."

Again the same smile overspread her features, and she said, "It fell down to me from Heaven."

"Such obstinacy," said the Chancellor with a stern look, "may cost you dear. For if you have no means of explaining the possession, the sole presumption is that you have stolen it from the owner." Then turning to the natural guardians of the child, her parents, who sat there undismayed or had effectually disguised their feelings, he said, "Have you no plea to offer?" They held their peace for a moment and at last the poor, proud Knight arising slowly fixed his eyes upon the learned Chancellor intently, and answered, "None whatever."

"Like parent, like child," said a couple who knocked their heads together in the gallery.

"My Lord," the Knight proceeded, "we come not here to prove an innocence confirmed by years of most unblemished conduct, and manifest to all the world. We come to learn the proofs of guilt, if any can be found, and who dare cast a slur, or shadow on the escutcheon of a house which has never been tarnished by one dishonourable deed. My daughter found the bauble in the highway, and has not crossed the threshold of the base, ignoble Count, nor tampered with his now-bought

tinsel. Let justice take its way. We have no fear of its decision."

This was said with a calm sense of security which astonished the auditors, the most of whom had little insight into the character of the speaker. Scarcely had Sir Ralph taken his seat, when the same unknown knight who had spoken to himself, was moved to express his thoughts aloud, and emerging from the throng approached the august tribunal, and first lowly bending to the Lord Chancellor, turned and fixed his eyes intently on Crystalline. The blushes on her sweet face came and went like flittings of auroral light. She stood as one who suddenly has met an angel in a thorny path. The youthful stranger flung his mantle from his shoulders on the ground, and stood there in a clerkly gown. His form so straight and manly, his brow so high and pure that it would rival the unsullied snow, his countenance which beamed with beauty and blent the looks of gentleness with the expression of chivalric courage, absorbed the court. The stillness seemed like that of death. Whence had he come and who was he? What was his object in now rising and what light could he possibly shed on this case of petty thieving? These questions were

hurriedly asked but not answered :—a mystery brooded over all.

“ MAY IT PLEASE THE COURT,” he said in a voice far-reaching, yet full of melody, “it appears to me that something of moment may be yet drawn forth before this case shall pass to judgment. If the aspect of innocence may sometimes mislead, that of guilt may be equally deceptive. There is a law upon our statute book, and it requires one proof more to fix the guilt upon my client. For restitution must be first demanded before an action can be brought. If then this opportunity have not been given, the spirit of our code exacts the heaviest penalty for slander. I ask that the lady Violante be at once recalled.”

The afflicted plaintiff who was still in the ante-chamber, and just preparing to depart, received the summons, and sore against her will was again conducted to the bar. She was fain to confess that this natural course of procedure had not been complied with, nay if the truth were told she had sedulously abstained from so doing. Perhaps she thought no jewel half so valuable as that of which she mourned the loss.

Returning to the castle of her father she immediately took to her room, her head throbbed violently, and the whole household was put in com-

motion, the servants running hither and thither to bring restoratives for the lamentable sickness of their pampered lady. What desperate selfishness is leagued with envy, and an overweening self-esteem!

The admission drawn from Violante was recorded in her very words, and this youthful lawyer, whom for the present we will call Hyperion, proceeded to address the Court. Though the case might be submitted on its present merits, he wished each shadow of suspicion to be swept away, and thus the examination went on.

Q. Tell me, fair lady, though the jewel fell from Heaven, exactly where you found it?

A. Beneath the oaks and chesnuts, before the cottage of the poor widow Maud.

Q. And for what purpose had you gone there?

The prisoner at the bar hung down her head and blushed.

"I will tell," exclaimed the aged woman, who had insisted upon being carried into court, and attempting to raise her feet as she cast a glance of love toward the child, "it was on a mission of charity, to carry consolation to the afflicted and bread to the poor."

"Then," said Hyperion "the jewelry did not

come amiss. Thieves are not much concerned about the poor."

When Crystalline narrated the circumstance of the scarlet thread, Hyperion's countenance flashed with strange delight, "Aha!" said he, "may it please the Court, we will follow out this clue though it should lead us through a labyrinth. However slender, perhaps it may connect the evidence and be strong enough to fetter the true thief." Soon as this excellent young lawyer had inquired and found that Crystalline possessed the skein, he ordered it to be sent for. When it came it was found wrapped round and round a little alms box, whose jingling treasures as it was placed upon the table, bribed the good opinion of the Court.

One Lady Eglantina sat an interested spectator of the scene with her head pressed against a porphyry column, glancing alternately from the Judge to the prisoner, and her eyes at last settled upon the handsome cavalier. "Ah," she exclaimed, "what grace!—what gesture!—what benignity of expression!—what honied words!—And the poor child, how well she bears the fiery ordeal!—"

Hyperion unwound the thread, and suspending it upon his finger held it up, and said, "This will

be a blood-dyed fillet if it do not bring acquittal to my client. Who in this court is able to match the texture and color of this thread? If any, speak."

The Lady Eglantina looked at it as it passed from hand to hand. Alas, alas!—it corresponded with the silken tassels on her mantle, and when she lost the spool, her golden thimble was also taken from her work-box. But she held her peace. For she had not the heart to injure any, nor did she wish to share the notoriety of Violante. She took care even lest her face should have a tell-tale look, but her heart misgave her that Crystalline with all her goodness was no better than a dexterous little thief. Some, it is well known, who could have no motive, have a mental organization so peculiar, that to save their lives they cannot keep their hands from picking and stealing. Theirs is an insane delight in the art and practice rather than in the thing possessed. No punishment will deter the cat from lying in wait for the canary, and Lady Eglantina classed the prisoner with those incurable unfortunates who are to be rather pitied than condemned.

But what use could Hyperion make of the thread now that he held the end of it, or how was it interwoven in this web of mystery? The spec-

tators could not divine what connexion existed between it and the diamond ring. The first was of no value, and did not seem to offer any clue, but the wise young counsellor had acted upon it as one who is drowning lays hold of a stout cord.

Now it happened that the floor of the court was so crowded that the air became oppressive, and the doors were ordered to be thrown wide open for a space while the officers did not permit the crowd without to enter. Hyperion addressed the judge and said that it would be necessary to go to the place where the gem was found, as even that might shed some light on the transaction. He had scarcely spoken, when with a piercing scream a jay whose wings were very ragged and the worse for wear, flew over the heads of those assembled, and after dodging about for some time, and cracking his head against the cornices pounced down upon the table of the Chancellor. He seized a very part of the record which contained the evidence of Violante, and sought a refuge in the folds of the crimson canopy. A clapping of hands, and a shout of applause, which no dignity of the court could silence, resounded throughout the chamber, and a cry, "the thief!—the thief!"

Then Doctor Bellario, a man of somewhat corpulent frame who had as yet watched the progress of the suit in silence, rose from the arm chair into which he had sunk, and while a humorous smile played upon his countenance, wished to make a statement to the court. He said that the winged culprit who had so boldly intruded and grabbed the records which he was now conning on yonder column was notorious in the whole vicinity for his petty larcenies. He knew his history well, and you could in vain plead an *alibi* in his behalf if ever a lump of sugar, or a sparkling jewel should be missing. Depend upon it that Blue Wing was the miscreant, and not the gentle Crystalline.

"The name of yonder bird," said he, "is Gyp. His parents scream on the tree tops which surround a deep marsh, and he was fledged a year ago in the Dark Forest high up upon a Lombardy poplar. The Shepherd boy Philæmon sold him to me for a silver crown, and I released him from confinement and treated him like a member of my family. He had the freedom of the library. By day he hopped about among the statutes of Justinian, and perched by night upon the shoulders of Aristotle. Not contented with dainty living he would watch his chance, and snatch a roll of bread or a trout from the table

and he stole my silver spoons and hid them in the curtains. One day he had a fight in the grove with a wood pecker, came in with a sore head, and betook himself at once to a more mischievous deviltry. I will not mention what he did. Probably not an individual in this court can conjecture what he did. Shall I tell you? I observe that the ears of all are pricked up. I am not going to tell. It is a secret. (*Great disappointment manifested in the court.*) No, my friends, not for the world. Let the police be at once sent to surround his house, and my word for it that some light will be shed upon the criminal statistics of this realm. As for the accused he is arrested already without warrant or subpœna, having voluntarily come within the jurisdiction of the court. Keep the doors closed; and by no means permit him to escape. A true *bill* will be found."

As the doctor took his seat after his oration was ended, another clapping of hands ensued, and the sheriff was forthwith despatched to discover the retreat of the bird. Having arrived at the spot he began eagerly to gaze up at the trees. Some person saw him so doing and was attracted by curiosity. A third going by noticed these two looking up into the air and joined the com-

pany. A wood cutter on his way to the forest perceiving the trio, pulled up his horses by the way. An old person who was spinning yarn at an opposite window recognized the sheriff in the crowd, went over with no head dress but a flowing cap, to see what was the matter and whether Maud was to be put in jail. At last a mob of a hundred people who had been sore against their will excluded from the trial sought nourishment for their disappointed but tickled curiosity, and with one consent directed their eyes if not their hearts toward Heaven. The nest was discovered high up in an almost inaccessible place. No ladder was tall enough to reach it and the bough would break beneath the weight of a man. It was so artistically builded and interblended among the thick leaves that only a keen eye could detect it, and the architect intended that only a pair of wings should reach it. Aladdin's cave with all its precious jewelry was not more curiously concealed and guarded. Two boys cast lots to determine who should be the climber. The Sheriff placed a coin upon his thumb-nail, one side of which bore an image of the Golden Duke, and tossed it in the air. "I say heads," cried Philidor, "And I say tails," cried Philopœna. Heads it was, and Philopœna lost it. The chance of

climbing and the coin itself fell to the other. Climbing is an accomplishment which is a glory of the boy, but alas ! as manhood is confirmed, how soon the knee-joints stiffen, and the muscles lose their clasping power, and a limber dexterity departs, and rheumatism sets in with darting pains, and gout gives the great toe a cruel twinge.

Philidor before his ascent was provided with a little ball of twine. Thrusting aside his shoes, he was soon higher than the heads of the company, when he took breath for a moment, standing on a platform of hands which were held up. Then, having calculated the distance, he hugged the trunk, and pushed himself upwards by the help of knots and twigs, until at last he was enabled to throw his foot on the nearest limb, and every hair on his head was pendent. Arrived at a ticklish standing-place, whence he could draw the nest to him, he inspected it carefully.

"Is there anything in it?" cried the crowd below.

"Yes," replied Philidor—"there are no eggs, but it is full of all sorts of things. It is a thread and needle shop in the air."

"Then," said the sheriff, "wait a moment if you please, Master Philidor ; do not touch it until

"I shall return." He went into the cottage and brought out one of the white willow baskets in which Crystalline was accustomed to carry provisions to poor old Maud.

"Now," said he, "let down the twine which is in your pocket, and when I have fastened it, draw up the basket, and carefully deposit the nest therein."

No sooner were the preparations complete, and the boy began to dislodge the nest, than a little mob of excited fledglings rushed about his head, twittering and screaming into his ears, and jostling him with their blue wings most saucily. In spite of their protestations the mossy house was released from the branch, and when the sheriff had got it, he suddenly covered it up with a napkin, and followed by the curious populace carried it to the Hall of Justice. His arrival was greeted with loud applause, and when he placed the basket on a table before the counsel, the blue-jay dropped from his beak the deposition of Violante. He had rendered it illegible, by picking it into holes, and he had blotted out on every page the damning ink of accusation. Moreover, in his sharpest shrillest note, he screamed aloud, as if to offer up the plea of guilty. The bird had a most ominous aspect, and as he sat on the top of the column, pro-

duced a visible impression upon the Court, as much so as if he had been a prophesying owl. In a case where witness or evidence was alike wanting, and justice wavered, and appearances were nearly balanced, like a spirit of the air, he hovered over to impress them with the truth. The object which usually would have attracted no notice, now gathered significance; but this is only another proof that in the affairs of men the smallest things may possess the greatest value.

Hyperion now removed the napkin, and peeped into the basket with a smile, as if he were examining the contents of that consummate delicacy, a nice blackbird pie. He seemed as one perplexed in discrimination. But when at last he pounced down with his thumb and fore-finger, and from the mass of interwoven straw, hay and stubble, drew forth the remnant of the identical scarlet skein, and held it up to view, repeated bravos rent the air from hall and gallery, and the lady Eglantina waved her kerchief beside the porphyry column.

"It was to this nest," said Hyperion, taking another peep, and then holding it up in the palm of his hand, "that the treasure was conveyed by yonder winged culprit, where becoming entangled in the meshes of the thread, it was drawn down,

and fell at the feet of the prisoner at the bar. In the innocence of her heart she supposed it a gift from the angels, and well she might; for their very errand is to befriend the innocent, and to cast at the feet of the pure and good, they may sometimes detach a jewel from their shining diadema. Envy my lord may borrow wings and scream aloft with sharp and slanderous voice, but the very air is flaked with buoyant pinions to uphold the good."

As he spake, the youthful prisoner stood as one entranced, with eyes now almost glassy, raised sublime; her arms were crossed upon her bosom, while peace and joy, which cannot be expressed, beamed on her heavenly countenance.

Hyperion put down the nest, and gazing fixedly upon it,—“Will the learned and excellent Doctor Bellario advance,” said he, “and lend the farther aid of his most weighty testimony? Here is the richest house which has yet been contrived by a cunning architect. How wisely built! How elaborately furnished! With what a store of useful, costly things, provided for old and young! It is a paragon of bird-nests. See! here is, I know not what, but it is fine exceedingly; a piece of most elaborate workmanship, taxing the keenest eyes and sharpest needle! How delicately

do the threads here twine about in figures, as if the spider drew them out to an attenuated fineness; yet it is the work of ladies' fingers. And to think that this——"

"It is mine! it is mine!" cried Clementina, one of the sweetest, simplest girls in Valrosarum. She spoke suddenly on the spur and excitement of the occasion, but frightened at her own voice, her face forthwith became suffused with blushes, and foolishly laughing, she sought to conceal her head on the bosom of her nearest friend.

Hyperion released the fabric from the mystic hiding place, and as he drew it toward him, yard by yard, its antique beauty struck the eyes of many ladies who were attached to dress. It was a piece of fine point lace, so ample that it might compose a bridal veil—so tender in the blending of its airy threads and net-work, that you might squeeze it in your hand, or that the shell of an acorn would contain it; a kind of finery for which there was a marvellous passion in the realm. For lace was greatly envied, and if it had been made a hundred years before so much the better. Old tastes revive. Inventive fashion is soon wearied out and recurs to former modes. Happy those who had expensive grandmothers trestled in vaults and sepulchres, whose memory was revived by

many an aromatic fan bequeathed, and by many a rich legacy of gems and laces. Hyperion invoked the graceful page who waited on the court, who at his request hasted with tripping step to restore the long lost treasure into the hands of the delighted and bashful Clementina.

Precious bird's nest! Eggs of gold would scarcely be of more value than some things which it contained. At all events the truth was likely to be hatched out of it; albeit it had been the nursery place of foul suspicion, and the very depository of thieves. Among other stores of whimsical variety, it contained a thimble, a bodkin and a button. But what's a thimble, and what's a bodkin, and what's a button, compared with life or character itself!

"Will the learned Doctor Bellario approach?" repeated Hyperion, eyeing him with a quizzical look, which somewhat excited the curiosity of the assembly, "and inspect for himself before we proceed in this scrutiny? A farther mystery is to be explained, and after that still another; the solution of which is only in possession of a single member of this Court. This case of petit larceny never might have been unravelled, had not accident, or rather Providence, enabled us to get hold of the end of a loose and floating thread. We

will attend to one thing at a time. In a little all will be made as clear as day."

The doctor had been seated in the middle of the court, complacently regarding his own image, reflected in the golden head of a stout cane, which he occasionally placed to his lips. According to the invitation which had been given him, he arose, and slowly approached the table, when, having curiously peeped into the nest, he pretended to be overwhelmed with shame, and covered his face with both his hands. Then commenced a piece of acting in dumb show, and a disjointed dialogue, which greatly puzzled the wits of those present. "By no means, I protest," said the doctor. "But it is essential," said Hyperion. "You must not." "But I will. It is yours." "It is not." "You have the fellow of it." "Not at all. I beseech, I implore." "Justice demands." "Then I invoke the protection of the Court." "Wait a moment."

The doctor seized his cane, and was precipitately retiring. He had just reached the bannisters of the great staircase, which conducted to the upper lobby, when, as he turned his face, as in duty bound, to make his obeisance in retiring, Hyperion drew forth from the bottom of the nest, where it had become matted and entangled, and held up to view a *dun-colored wig*. A shout of

laughter rang through the hall, and a cry from all quarters—"Bellario! Bellario! Oh, the learned Doctor Bellario!" Before the sensation had died away, the subject of it had effected a secure retreat. At last the inventory of the furniture contained in the house of the thievish bird was completed, and another proof added to those already existing, of the wickedness which is sometimes perpetrated in high places, and under the thick leaves of concealment. Not a doubt remained in the mind of the Court as to the true delinquent, and without further delay, the judge put upon his head the cap which he wore in judging, commanded silence; and while all eyes were fixed upon him pronounced the verdict of acquittal, and commanded that the prisoner be discharged from custody. At the same moment a chaplet of pure white flowers was placed upon the brow of Crystalline.

Many of those present, especially the poor, her pensioners, were affected to tears. They crowded around her, wrung her little hands, and hung upon her neck. She alone remained immovable, alike serene in sunshine, and unshaken amidst the storm.

It was first ordered by the Court that the ring itself be given to Violante; next, that as they

who bring false accusations should suffer penalty, and make compensation according to their power to those whom they have injured, that the Count be mulcted in a thousand crowns, and be imprisoned until the fine was paid. Moreover, that the thieving bird be put out of the way, lest he should be the origin of more mischief. A loud scream followed this announcement, and a flapping of wings, by the miscreant, who still sat on the top of the column, and who had heretofore occasionally thrust his beak under his feathers, and trimmed his wings with remarkable *non chalance*.

About this time a little confusion occurred in the corridor, proceeding from the arrival of some prisoners,—a whole party of Egyptians, who had committed many depredations in the neighborhood, but who had hitherto, with consummate tact, eluded the officers of justice. No sooner were they brought in, than they were recognized by Crystalline, as the same people who had decoyed her into their encampments, and they now stood as sorry a group as you could wish to see covered with rags and finery. The career of robbery which they had so long followed was at an end; they had been intercepted on their way towards Alicant! They were to be tried at once,

for justice seldom loitered in the dominions of the Golden Duke.

As they were brought forward to the upper part of the hall, and placed in a sort of box by themselves, the candidates for certain condemnation, they exhibited the reckless and abandoned air of such banditti; faces destitute of any gleam of moral sense; only Mabel, poor Mabel, whose beauty could not be denied, looked like a redeeming spirit in their midst. Her lustrous eyes were dimmed with tears which chased each other down her face of clear transparent olive; but when she raised them up and looked on Crystalline, she uttered a loud cry of delight, bursting from those who held her in their custody, and went and seized her hand, and kneeled at the feet of the latter, as if she had been indeed a little princess. It was a scene which touched the hearts of the spectators, yet they did not know the circumstance which gave its chief effect.

The mandate of the chancellor was carried to the count. He was sitting at his table, in his own house, sipping wine with a few friends, whom the trial furnished with abundant food for speculation. They were not so brutal as to be jocose about the unfortunate heiress of Fall Down Castle. The count kept company with a set of asses, who

prided themselves on an ornate style of living, but they had no heart, no soul, no sentiment, and their education was neglected. On the present occasion he acted with promptness and alacrity. He requested the officer to be seated, informed his friends of the peculiar dilemma in which he was placed, and made light of it, requested them to amuse themselves till his return, with wine and almonds, took from the table a basket of silver net-work, went to his strong box and counted out the money, and then leaping into his carriage, which was soon at the door, returned once more to the Hall of Justice. No man was fonder of dispensing money when he could not help it, but then he liked to do it with *eclat*, and to be pompous in his liberality. Very glad was he to come off with a thousand crowns at present, for he began to be alarmed lest odium should fall upon his family. At the same time there was no fault of which his nature was capable which he did not imagine would be twice atoned for by so large a sum. He looked at the coins with misgivings, you may rely upon it, as he rode alone, and more than once wished that they were again in his coffers. He also studied how he should get them back in a year at least by adding to his rents or by retrenching his expenses. He meant to win

the credit of the deed, but to make his tenants pay for it. I am afraid that he was a bad man, this Count of Valrosarum.

Holding the silver basket in his hand, he approached the tribunal with a pretty grace and with abundant confidence. He said that he had been the unwilling agent of bringing perplexity on one who it appeared was entirely innocent of the crime specified, and while he congratulated her upon an honourable acquittal, he wished to make his humble apology in obedience to the injunction of the Court, and to say that no circumstance could be more gratifying to himself and his family, than the happy result of this trial. Indeed it was not in accordance with their wishes that the prosecution had been commenced, but if they had borne testimony, it must be admitted that appearances, which were sometimes deceitful, had justified them in so doing ; and so saying, he placed the basket, which was very heavy, in the hands of Crystalline.

"Take it, my child," he said, "and be assured that if this right honourable Court had decreed it ten times larger, it would be paid with equal pleasure." He looked around with a complacent smile as if to read the effect of this compulsory largess, but there was not a single token of appro-

bation to reward his handsome conduct. No eye smiled upon him, and no hand applauded, but there was a feeling of satisfaction that so rich a perquisite had fallen to the little lady. Who now should talk contemptuously of the heiress of Fall Down Castle, when all hearts yearned toward her, and she had a thousand crowns in hand? That was a large amount indeed for one whose liberal desires had been somewhat compressed by a contracted income, and indeed some thought that Crystalline looked wistfully upon it. But if she did, it was not from any lurking secret passion to possess it, for suddenly her whole expression changed, her eyes flashed fire, and lighted up her face with rage and scorn, she lifted high the heavy basket with both hands above her head, and in an instant dashed the jingling treasure down with might and main upon the tessellated pavement of the Hall of Justice. It was a deed which sent a thrilling shout up to the very dome and rafters.

"You have done well, my client," said Hyperion. "So great a sum would render this man poorer, and yourself not richer, for gold and silver shed no fresher lustre on an unblemished name. It is already infinitely precious. It is the wealth of wealth, the jewel of all jewels. You might

as well reflect a splendor on the sun from ingots; but to be paid for insult, to soothe a wounded spirit with a bribe like that, it is too pitiful! You have done well, my client."

The officers picked up the coin and put them in the basket, and restored the latter to the Count's bereaved arms. He took it with a baffled look, yet not unmixed with satisfaction.

"I have but done my duty and obeyed your Honour's mandate," he said, appealing to the Court, "but if the lady spurns the boon so haughtily, she may some time need it when it may not so easily be gained. I ask permission to retire."

"Stay," said the Lord Chancellor, "there is no rule to force the injured party to receive the forfeit, but if it fail to reach its proper destination, the law consigns it to the general coffers of the State. We so decree it."

The Count folded his arms and bowed his acquiescence, then turned upon his heel.

"One moment," said Hyperion, "I bespeak your patience. There is something farther too momentous to be omitted, as it sheds new light upon the case in hand. I possess additional evidence which respects the interest of my client. I ask for further judgment. Will the Court permit me to proceed?"

"Yes," said the Chancellor.

All the bad passions of the Count were roused at once by this appeal, and flashed upon his face, which wore an aspect black and diabolic. "How now!" he said, speaking in a furious and vindictive tone, "for whom do you take me? Four times have I turned back, and think you that I am here to be trampled upon and insulted? I shall hold you to a strict account when this Court shall be adjourned. Perhaps you do not know me; and who are you, let me ask, for methinks that you make yourself exceeding busy for a stranger in these parts."

Hyperion smiled. "'Tis true," said he, "I am a stranger, but if I am, I am still bound to defend the innocent, and I will see this matter sifted to the bottom. Another suit, precisely similar to that now ended, may come out of this, and I shall call it to an immediate hearing. I charge you, sir, with holding stolen property. That is the very substance of the accusation which by your testimony had like to have been fastened on this young person. See, now, how curious and involved are the ways of Providence, to those who seek them out. He who too rashly rushes to the law and asks but justice, may perhaps find judgment. It is but Haman hanged again.

Beware, sir. I have more carefully studied out my accusation, than you have yours, and I do not alledge without substantial proof, as you have done. Rest assured it shall be forthcoming, and that speedily, not to confound you as I sincerely hope. If you act as well in this instance as you have just done, there will be a loop-hole for you to creep through, Count!"

"How dare you?" said the latter, who almost choaked with rage, "you must forget to whom you are speaking. Charge *me* with so foul a thing! It is preposterous on the very face of it."

"Not more preposterous, nor half so much, as that yon lady should be guilty of it. Is there something in the semblance of your character which should belie the very thought, and are her cheeks so fair, that they but indicate the canker? Are you the rose which only figures fairest quality; and is she the noxious flower where you may look for nettles? Does your wealth place you above suspicion, and is her reputation but the primal evidence of guilt? Oh, sir, I fear your notions are confused, or that your eyes are blinded; that thinking of yourself more highly than you ought, you have forgotten that sweet charity which is due to others. Confound not charity. Your thousand crowns are spurned, but were

they twenty ten times counted, they would still be trampled on while virtue was uplifted. Count, you have more reason to be suspected than you had to suspect my client."

"What!" said the other, "when she wore my daughter's ring, which I purchased of a jeweler, notoriously upon her finger? If I did her wrong in supposing that she had stolen it, for which I have atoned—*atoned*—(this he said with marked emphasis) she was at least unconsciously, the receiver of stolen property."

"In which case you are now, or I regret to say, your daughter. But it is no fault of either. Count, I only state the fact, and ask for restitution of the jewel. I do not bring a charge of stealing, but the ring is Crystalline's, not Violante's. It must be restored."

"This is sheer nonsense, and cool impertinence," replied the Count; "explain yourself, and that quickly, for I would depart."

"Well, then, please listen to a simple tale, which I shall not be long in telling. There is an inscription on the ring your daughter has. By whose command was it engraven?"

"Not by mine. The letters were upon the inner rim. It was for the jewel that I bought it."

"So I thought. Perhaps at first you did not

see the letters, nor suspect you got the bauble only at second-hand. Such is the case. In the Capital not far from where the Golden Duke resides, there is a youth by whose command that ring was made and those letters were engraven: '*To the most worthy,*' and '*To the lovely, from one who loves.*' I know him well. Disregarded and unknown, for many a day he went upon his travels, and when he heard of Crystalline, through admiration of her character, he sent her this token. But it never came directly to her hands. The messenger was waylaid in the woods by robbers, who stripped him of that and of all else which he carried with him. Now mark. At the next town they sold the ring to the jeweler of whom you bought it. A wicked bird, educated under the auspices of the learned Bellario, (*laughter,*) snatched it from the toilet table of Violante, and Crystalline again obtained it from the nest which is upon this table, and Violante in the present trial regained it from the possession of Crystalline, while my client now demands it back again, for it is hers. I ask the silence of the assembly until my narrative is ended. For what is strange, my Lord, the very villain who first stole the ring by the wayside, after it had been bought and sold, did steal it once again, but

this time stole the owner with it, on whose hand it was, in the thick woods, till she and it again were taken from the thief, and now the thief is stolen, or at least restricted of his liberty, and there he sits trying to draw towards him with his foot a straggling piece of money from the heap brought here by this Count of Valrosarum. Inspect the basket, and my word for it, there will be one crown missing."

This was found to be the fact. The ~~giver~~ general had contrived to draw the coin toward him, hoping therewith, perhaps, to bribe the jaoler.

The Counsellor proceeded.

"What is most curious, all the parties I desire, are now present. Not a single one is missing. Not a link is wanting. All the chain of evidence will be complete. It is not a gossamer thread which I now hold, it is strong knit and will hold together. Let the young man who caused the fabrication of the ring come forward!"

A lengthened pause ensued, but when the request was renewed, there was no answer.

"Where is your witness?" said the Count, with scornful triumph. "You are too fast, and may perhaps outstrip your age. Your impudence at least is great for one so youthful."

"Well, then," said Hyperion, "since nobody answers, I will myself; I swear upon God's word, *I am the man.*"

"Who are you? I ask again," exclaimed the Count. "None knows you. Perhaps your word or oath are not to be relied on."

"Oh, I am no one but an honest man, whose oath may be relied on," said Hyperion, with a threatening look. "But shall I prove it? You have a right to ask it."

"Not at all," replied the Count. "Go on."—He began to be afraid that he was in the hands of a magistrate.

"I see the messenger by whom I sent the ring. Trevillyan!"

Scarce had he spoken, when the trusty Sheriff, whose commission was from head-quarters, hastened to the bar. He testified that travelling alone he had been waylaid by gipsies, who had robbed him, but by a careful watching of his chance he waylaid *them*, and so retrieved his merit, and that the rascals were now present. They were at the bar."

Hyperion whispered to Trevillyan, on which the latter went into the body of the Court, and found the very jeweler who bought the ring and sold it to the Count of Valrosarum. They faced

each other, and the Count was fain to recognize the man from whom he got it, while the other could identify the gipsy chief from whom he purchased it.

"Well, then," replied the Count, "I have not stolen, but I must acknowledge that I have purchased stolen property, and will restore the ring, which is on my daughter's finger."

"That is all which is required of you," replied Hyperion, "or else I shall hold you amenable as a thief, and your life in forfeit."

The Chancellor decreed the restitution of the ring.

"Here, then," Hyperion exclaimed, smiling, "we stand by a remarkable coincidence, all thieves together, but," pointing upward, "yonder thief has been the cause of all this mischief. This may teach us the value of little things!"

The Count released from limbo, got into his carriage with the empty basket, and returned to his friends, who were still engaged with wine and almonds. They were, as I have said, a set of asses, for no other name will suit, and hailed his coming with an appropriate bray of pleasure. Little did it concern them what had taken place in the interim, so long as they had had a merry time. They laughed, and joked, and questioned,

and they made the most of hospitality. They shoved questions at him, and put the vulgar rings which they all wore upon their fingers under his very nose, and teased and twitted him about his luck. Bad as he was, the Count was better than his friends by far, though this is not saying much for him.

"Now," said Hyperion, "we will restore these trophies to the nest, and then retain the nest itself as a trophy. We except the crowns which go into the general treasury, and the wig, which must be restored to the head of Belario." So saying he threw in the silken skein, and a spool of cotton; while one after another the ladies who had received their property, sent it back by the hands of the little page; the bodkin, the fine point lace, and the golden thimble. It was the richest bird's nest ever built.

Execution was now decreed upon the culprit, who still sat a quiet, and as it seemed, an interested spectator. He came in at the door and could not get out at the window. The first was closed against him, and the crystal dome allowed no exit and no entrance but of the mellow golden beams of day. For though he had repented of his deeds, and virtually confessed and gave himself into custody, and threw himself upon

the mercy of the Court, the severity of justice doomed him to be shot, while those assembled were to be spectators of the tragedy. Unhappy fate!

The aid of two boy-archers was invoked, who were to try their skill. They were the supple, agile, rival climbers. They entered proudly, with their loaded quivers on their backs, and with decorated bows bended, and a soft and gaudy plume, sprang from the buttons of their velvet caps over their downy cheeks, descending almost to the belts of their tunics. The eye of Philoœna flashed with proud ambition, and Philidor again determined to excel. The first shot was decreed to Philoœna without the casting of a lot. He took his station firmly, and placed an arrow on the string. The word was given, "Make ready—take aim—now!" In a twinkling the feathered missile whizzed upon its errand, and pinned the culprit to the cornice by his dexter wing. He fluttered but a moment, and became still upon his post. He was unhurt. Now Philidor essayed. The arrows crossed each other, and quivered in the wall. The sharpened point of Philidor's had pierced his other wing, and the bird could scarcely move. Pinioned against the wall, he was a fixed and easy mark for the de-

stroyer. The boys glanced upward with their bright and jet-black eyes, to correct their fault of aim, and make a better reckoning. With curious tact, they made a choice of arrows from their quivers, and placed them side by side, and touched the points, and rectified the shafts. Then pity moved the heart of the fair lady, and with brimming eyes she asked the boon of mercy for the bird. The very injury it had done endeared it to her. At her request his sentence was commuted, but he was condemned to life-long imprisonment under the gentle goalership of Crystalline. Would that all evil doers were as free from guilt.

The boys were greatly disappointed. On the next attempt they felt secure of hitting. But whoso looks aloft and strings his bow, and aims his arrows at the sun itself, is not disgraced, though he should fall below the mark. It is true the archers missed. They might as well have shot a mile too far. All failure forfeits its reward, and absolute merit dwells but in perfection. Were this law not just, no stimulus to persevering effort would exist.

Hyperion smiled, but drawing from his purse two golden pieces, he addressed the rival archers. "Take these," he said, "though you deserve no gift at all. A little further practice would

have rendered you consummate marksmen, but, you have merited the severest censure, because you have forgone that little. Now mark you Philidor, and you Philopœna: when next you pull your bowstrings, let the feathers wing the shaft, but let the barb be tinged with blood. Straight to the heart, my boys."

Then Philidor and Philopœna took the gold, and waved their feathered caps with graceful gesture, and from that moment they resolved, no matter what they aimed at, to reach the mark, or die.

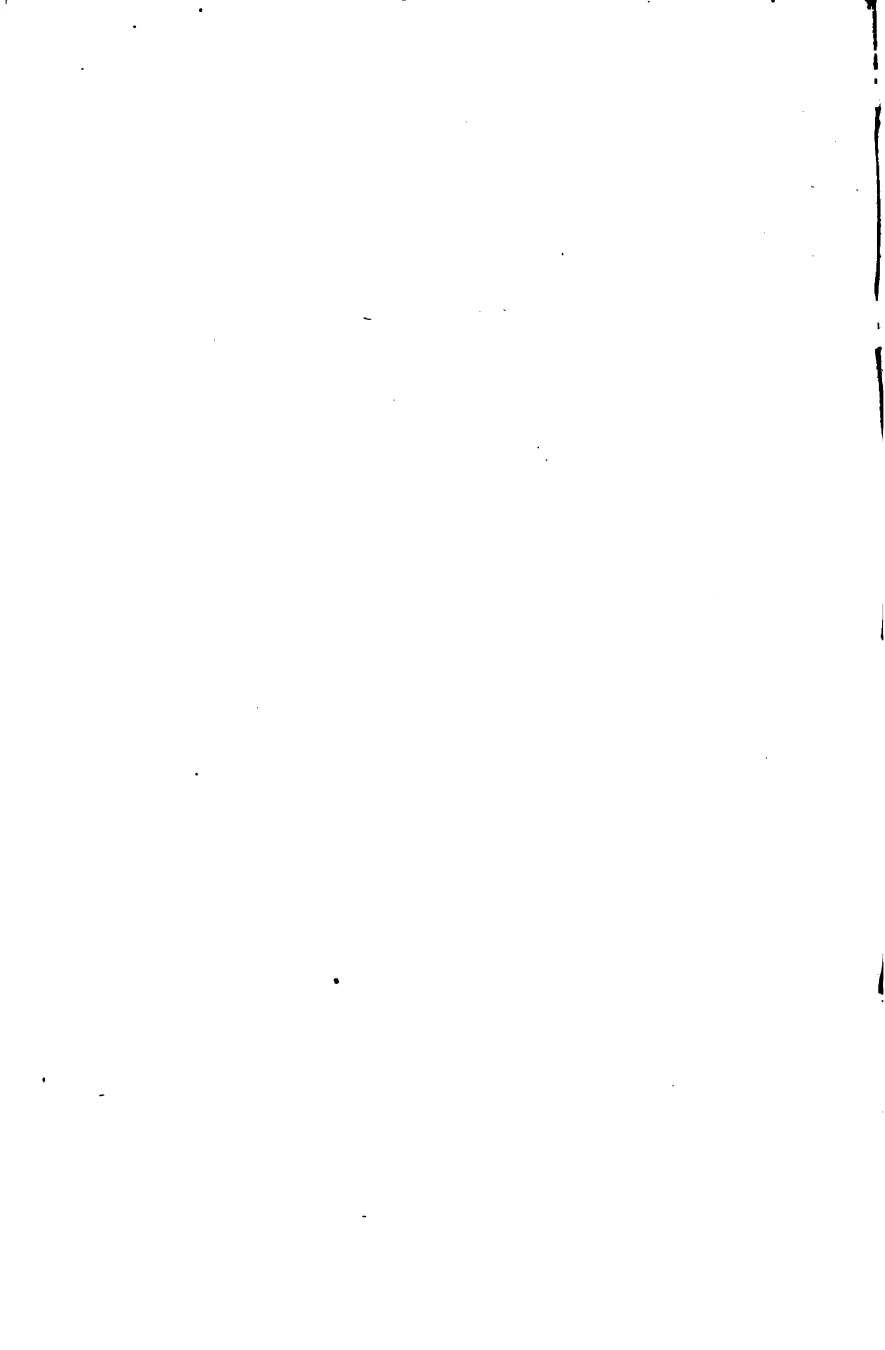
Quickly a ladder was brought in and blue-bird extricated and released from limbo, the next moment reposed with ruffled plumage, just like a gentle dove, upon the breast of Crystalline. But the lady Eglantina whispered to her maid, who went and soon returned bearing a cage with silver bars, to be the future prison of the convicted thief. The jay dashed against the wires for some moments as with a sad remembrance of the airy tree-tops, then being composed upon the perch, he sang a few notes with a harsh and quavering voice.

What made the cheeks of Crystalline to be suffused with sudden blushes, and her frame to tremble? She had recognized the guardian angel

sent to save her. He it was on whom she had conferred that slightest boon, a cup of pure cold water, the Knight Errant and gentleman in the Dark Forest, and in the Court of Chancery a Counsellor. A buzz and murmur were apparent in the assembly, as in a forest, when a sudden breeze has caused its multitudinous thick leaves to flutter. The chancellor adjourned the court; the doors were thrown wide open; Hyperion unrobed him of his clerky gown; he caught his gentle client by the hand, and led her to the vestibule; thence to the chariot drawn by four white horses, with the ducal arms upon its panels. "Postilion!" he exclaimed, and waved his hand; but as he took his seat, and the wind cast the lapels of his coat aside, revealing the illustrious badge of royalty, and as he bent his head with matchless grace upon his breast, a shout of welcome rent the skies from the assembled multitude, a recognition, and a general cry—"The Prince! the Prince! Long live the prince of Calos! God save the Golden Duke of Valrosarum!"

The poor Knight and his wife, the prince and Crystalline, the silver cage and bird, which seemed ill omened, but more happy now than any heaven-ascending lark, were whirled away just like the remnant of a vision while still the ladies waved





their kerchiefs, and the bells sent up a merry peal, and still from lip to lip, from throng to throng, passed on the acclamation, "Long live the Prince of Calos, and God save the Golden Duke of Valrosarum!"

The road was dusty, and as a cloud like that of smoke impenetrated by the setting sun, involved the chariot, and the milk white steeds, and rolled along with kindred speed, the sight was one of triumph and enchanting glory,—the apotheosis of the good and beautiful; an apparition seen and lost to human eyes forever. The vision faded and the applauding echoes died upon the air. Alas! men turn their backs upon the painful pilgrims on a dutiful journey, but cheer them at the goal with shouts of welcome, when they see a halo around their brow!

A glow of heartfelt satisfaction rested on the face of the many poor people who were the friends of Crystalline, and still they were disposed to circulate in little knots around some speaker, even as small eddies spin around when the whirlwind of excitement has passed away. Remarks like these might now be heard by the passers by.

"Is that the one who wore the fairy slippers, and was put into a silver flagon at her birth?"

"Is she the one so lately treated as a criminal?"

Whoever thought that she would come to anything and now she's sitting with a prince."

"What if his Highness should propose to marry her. We hope he will."

A peasant leaped upon the wall, and waved his cap aloft, and cried aloud, "Cheers thrice repeated for the gentle Crystalline. Cheers for the future princess!" And they were given with heart and soul, on which the crowd dispersed.

Violante was reclining on a sofa in her father's house, still ignorant of the turn which things had taken. The ring was sparkling on her finger, though it had missed its proper destination. It was intended *for the most worthy*, and not for one who had proved so destitute of human feeling. She was in vain attempting to soothe her mind, running with listless eye over the pages of an old romantic fiction, full of love-letters, and a mawkish sentiment. But, although she had read scores of such already, they had not improved her mind, nor touched her heart with any sentiments of healthful tendency.

"Who," said she, throwing down the book, "is that impertinent fellow who made himself officious in the court? He resembles much a beggar

whom I turned away, only he is far better dressed, No one knows him, I will answer for it."

Her maid burst into the room, almost breathless, exclaiming, "Oh, Miss, Miss, make haste! or the chariot with the four white horses will have gone by. The prince has come, and the bells are all ringing, and the people are running, and—and—and—"

Violante hastened to the window, looked through her eye glass, and in the distance beheld her rival seated with the one who had taken part against her, followed by a host of cavaliers and mounted gentlemen, and watched the cavalcade proceeding exactly in the direction of Fall Down Castle. She turned pale and almost fainted in the arms of her father who had just entered.

"Ah," said he, "my daughter, this is a pretty business; into what trouble have you brought your papa! the stranger is the Prince, and you must give up the ring, and I have been compelled to pay down a thousand crowns for that little vixen. I am almost ruined, and I am afraid that we shall stand small chance at Court."

Violante trembled terribly and cast a woful look at the tiara which she had expected to have bound about her snowy brow upon the occasion of the ball. Her hopes were blighted, and all

objects lost their lustre in her eyes. She took the bauble, and cast it on the floor, as Crystalline had done the silver basket which contained her father's treasure, but it was from a different feeling. It was from wounded vanity, not from the loftier, nobler sense of pride; because she magnified the little far above the great. He who owns a million ducats, will not break his heart over the loss of one poor farthing. Thus the possession of divine truth will make one triumph over the loss of mere trifles, or else the trifles transcend in his eyes the value of Heaven.

In a short time after the events just narrated, public opinion veered about like a well-poised weather-cock in answer to a fresh breeze. The Count was now obliged to dismiss his porter, because this domestic had nothing to do. Nobody called at the house. This was the beginning of his retrenchment to make up for the loss of the thousand coins. After that, to speak in metaphor, he cut off the head of his chief cook to coincide with the diminished scale of his entertainment, and storing away his best carriages for more halcyon days, he suffered Jehu to depart from his household.

The vicinity of Fall Down Castle became, however, a place of great resort. Almost every one

of any consequence, for leagues and leagues, to say nothing of those who were considered as of no account, left their names with many kindly wishes that the health of the injured party had not suffered by privation, and that as the past had been marred by bitter grief, so the future might be crowned with innumerable blessings.

A word now for the gentleman who had done such good service in a righteous cause. Could he be drawn by a skilful hand, his would be the picture of an honest man, of the immortal order of real Knights Errant, and a true Prince of the blood Royal. Although he had his singularities, —(who has not?)—they could not derogate from one whose objects were to be commended, and whose excellence of heart was proved.

Like Haroun Al Raschid, he liked to go about unknown among the people. It was not to spy out evil, but to see how men behave themselves who are not conscious that they are observed. It was not to punish vice, but to maintain and to reward consistent virtue. Artificial society is abundant in devices, and you must catch men unawares to find out what they are. In daily life some small hypocrisy is considered almost needful. He who says exactly what he means, or acts out his own character too freely, who does not turn

aside for what the world may say, or pay a due respect to what the world may think, will at one time be called a rude fellow, at another a simpleton or a fool.

Hence it was worth while to come down suddenly on those who had not time to snatch their diplomatic masks, or don their courtiers' robes, to oil the supple hinges of their knees, or tune their voice to some melodious measure, but for the once performed a real part unconscious of the presence of a Prince. Catch a man who has flung his coat on a brier-bush, or is trimming his vines in a garden; meet the ploughman in the field at noon-day, or beneath his porch when the sun is setting, and he will tell you an honest tale. Perhaps among his native wilds the shepherd speaks his mind in natural tones, and where the birds sing blithely and the flowers untrained are clustering round the poor man's lattice, you may chance to hear the idiomatic language of the heart.

If the hero of our little tale assumed disguise like others, it was from a widely different motive. It was to hide the marks which most men like the sun to shine on, and which too often glitter to deceive. His was the veil which Modesty wears before its countenance, and though people on the

outside cannot peer through it, the eyes within can behold those objects clearly which might have been invisible, if the veil had not been worn.

. But mark you, he disguised his body, not his soul. The annals of the realm have pictured him as we have, sincere, candid, generous, brave, just, the defender of the weak, a mirror of chivalry, a tower of strength, a pattern of manly virtues. In the palace he had the simple manners which might attach to a poor pilgrim ; when he bore the staff of a pilgrim, he impressed one with the dignity of a prince. His demeanour was suited to all positions alike. While some lords are too pompous for the peasant, and some peasants are too clownish for the lords, Hyperion,—I will call him so no longer,—the Prince of Calos, had the grace adapted to every station, and blent the ranks and orders by a thrilling and electric love. Though he did not demean himself to reach the humble, he had not to raise himself to be upon a level with the great. The less he assumed to be so, the more you knew him to be a true Prince. But although the most affable of his father's subjects, it is no contradiction to declare that he had the intensest pride of all. True pride like his, is but a keen and native sense of right and decency. It has a form erect, an eye uplifted, and a

brow sometimes severely calm. It curls the lip when true propriety is outraged, and draws the sword when honour needs to be avenged. But it never turns the look of scorn on humble merit, or on real intrinsic worth. It rather kneels to these in order to be knighted. An unblemished modesty is the peculiar birthright of a prince.

Were there no valleys low—no mountains high,  
Could tower above the level plains, and rise to meet the sky.

On a hill which formed a part of the range on which was builded Fall Down Castle, but at so great a distance that sometimes only its battlements could be discerned through the clouds which floated in fantastic shapes above the mountains, stood another castle occupied by an old man who never went abroad, and scrupulously minded his business. This he always had done, when at the prime of life he was active and fully able to attend to other matters than his own. Would that such might live a hundred years and their posterity be as numerous as the stars of heaven. But unfortunately their duration is not remarkable, and their lineage comes to an end. They soon nestle in Abraham's bosom, and leave this world to busy meddlers; whose generation fails not. Such was to be the fate of this one

who was already on a cloudy pinnacle as if ready to be snatched away. He had no wife, no children to inherit his qualities, and to mind their own business when he was gone. Racked by an hereditary gout, he could but tottle about among the flowers of his garden, or soothe his painful foot on puffed-up cushions, waiting for the cruel pain to bolt into his vital parts.

To his lot it fell to entertain the prince, and better entertainment could not be found. Betwixt the twinges of an anguish which passed occasionally like a fitting shadow over a tranquil brow, he entered into pleasant converse, and from the storehouse of his memory, brought forth things new and old. That he had a streak of eccentricity in his character was well known, but in nothing was it more clearly manifested than in the strange quality already mentioned of minding his own affairs. This, however, he had done to such perfection, that they were in the most admirable order, and he had large funds in bank.

"Carl," said he, speaking to a one eyed domestic who came in to poke the fire and light the lamps, "call Philander. Heigh-ho! there it takes me!" he cried aloud, compressing his lips, closing his eyes tight, and seizing hold of his major toe.

Immediately after his face was covered with sunbeams.

Obedient to the summons, an ill-fashioned dwarf appeared holding in his hands a bunch of keys, a new Thersites, to be sure, with a face so impudent, that one longed to whip him until he squeaked.

"Philander," said he, speaking very slowly, word by word, "go into the little cellar—not the intermediate, mark you—and in the cobweb corner in the next bin but the last with the blue padlock, you will find on this side of the bin, three bottles standing by themselves. Bring the one sealed with yellow wax and marked X."

The well-trained servant who had respect to no one but his master, executed this commission with precise correctness, fetching with him a bottle of old Burgundy.

"That is right," said the other; "Philander, call Carl."

Carl came.

"Carl, roll my writing table this way. Excuse me, Royal Highness."

In a moment the Baron had written a few lines and hastily folding the note, "Go down to the valley," he said, "and deliver this to Don Umbroso, and return."

Carl disappeared.

"At what hour does your Royal Highness go to the entertainment to-night?"

"When the clock strikes nine; that will be in sufficient season," replied the Prince.

"The carriage shall be in waiting at that hour. It is the very time that I drag my diseased carcase to the couch. In the meanwhile, we will taste a little of this cordial. It is of a vintage so old, that I dare scarcely name it. Here are grapes which blushed and bloomed when the foundations of this house were laid, and the bottle was resealed and placed where it lately stood, at the accession of the last Golden Duke. I have stamped it as the Coronation brand."

Scarcely was the cork withdrawn when the whole apartment was pervaded by the ethereal and delicious scent of grape vines, odours marvelously wafted from the long-ago.

"Ah," said the Prince, "I smell the blossoms of a tree whose root is dead. They are borne to me from the spirit land. They are more welcome than Arabian frankincense which greets the mariner far out upon the stormy gulfs. Pleasant indeed is this day's sail in life's tempestuous voyage. **WE DRINK THE MEMORY OF THE PAST.**"

"God bless you!" said the Baron, while his eyes filled up with gentle tears, "indeed we do—the Memory of the Past."

In a very little time Carl returned.

"He goes down the mountain side," said the Baron, "with the fleetness of a rolling stone. But my word for it, Umbroso will come up nearly as fast. Nevertheless, his labor in more senses than one, will be up-hill work. Excuse me, his presence will be necessary for a few moments. I hear him now."

Umbroso entered, but looked embarrassed, and his eyes fell when they met those of the prince. It was not the first time that they had been cast in that direction. Like Violante, he had turned a stranger from his door, but let him not be too severely censured; it was the fault of ignorance; he would not have done so for the world *had he known him to be the Prince*. But now he bent him low, just like a certain "humble man" of whom we read in story, and "struck the very base note of humility."

His embarrassment arose partly from another cause; in dividing equally a show of loyalty to a higher presence, and a fealty to the Baron. The affection vibrated like a needle striving to point to the true pole. At last it became fixed and reso-

lute in the direction of self-interest. He had a new suit of black stored away, and a fine cambric kerchief, and he coveted the office of weeping as chief mourner at the grave of a rich man who had no heirs. But except when he had a bad cold, there was no hydraulic power in his system to raise up from the fountain a single tear. Sometimes indeed he *almost* wept because he could not weep. He transferred his passion from tender maidens of unconquerable gold, to old men in a pleasant dotage. He went a-courting beneath the withered boughs of age, and led his love among the crackling leaves which strewed the wintry ground, and in the ardour of a young romance, looked down upon the black and sullen flood which borders on the realms of Pluto. Then something like a crisp and verdant leaf would spring up in the tepid breath of sympathies, and something like a hectic flush would spot the ashen cheeks of bank-side flowers. Beware, ye curious and intruding ones, who would approach too near the solitary couple! Silence, ye swains, for see the enamoured peep behind the rocks to watch his love throw off the garments of poor frail mortality, and plunge into the stream of death.

To proceed, the Baron drew a parchment from his drawer, at which Umbroso peered wistfully, and turning to the latter said,

"You have manifested a great affection for me. I will request you to witness and to sign this document. The notary will be here in a few moments. Ah! there he is. Wills must be made, and cripples cannot expect to last forever. Heigh-ho!—there it takes me again."

"Oh my Lord," said Umbroso, "it makes me profoundly melancholy to hear you allude in the remotest manner to such a possible contingency. I pray that you may live many years," and he raised his eyes toward heaven.

"Read," said the Baron, placing the parchment under his eyes. "Write," added he, putting the pen in his hand.

Umbroso devoured the manuscript, and while his countenance changed frequently in a way which could not be disguised, affixed his trembling signature. He perceived that he was not even mentioned in the paper, but that his friend had bequeathed all his possessions to the poor Knight who lived by the ruined Castle. Before the ink was dry he took up his hat and cane, bade a hasty farewell and rushed precipitately down the mountain side. His feelings were indescribable, and as

he paused upon a bridge to curse and swear, he thought that the moon and stars were blotted out. So perish all who play the hypocrite for filthy lucre.

"Hark!" said the Baron when the Prince and he had conversed pleasantly for an hour or two, "I hear the carriage wheels. Your Royal Highness must depart:" but he added with a benignant smile, "we shall meet again to-morrow—to-morrow."

"Yes, to-morrow," said the Prince, and in a moment after, descending from the castle, he saw in the lone valley the lights which twinkled in the homes of cottagers. In the little village and in the separate groups of houses they resembled constellations, disappearing and then shining out like planets in a lower firmament. A city or hamlet seen from an eminence at night is a picturesque and most suggestive spectacle. As when we gaze upon the quiet stars and from their beams divine the secrets of their spheres, so we strive to enter into the mysterious precincts where the distant taper indicates a home. Those darting rays if guided by intelligence within might write down many an exquisite tale of human life upon the far-off gazer's brain. For where a lamp is lighted or there are warm embers on a hearth,

there is a theatre large enough for human passions to have play. What peace!—what joy!—what transport!—or alas! what sufferings!—what despair!—

There was one bright space in the middle of the dark, toward which the carriage of the Prince was gradually wending. A row of brilliantly illuminated windows might be seen for many a league.

Yonder was the beautiful hall which the ancient Dukes once used as a chamber of audience, before the seat of government had been removed, and although for the most part in latter days consigned to darkness and to cobwebs, it was on festivals still made to be the scene of joy.

And now a thousand wax lights blazed insconces on the walls in long array beneath the cornices, or ranged in forms of conic beehives, or disposed in sumptuous chandeliers. High up within a showy orchestra there sat a multitude of harpers, and those who played on lutes and flutes, hautboys and sweet recorders, or who blew through silver bugles, and as the Prince who joined his well dressed retinue in the outer chamber came among the citizens, the minstrels played a most inspiring anthem composed in centuries gone by in honor of the Golden Dukes.

Then the ball opened, and the Prince led down the fairest maiden of the whole assembly in the dance. It was not Crystalline nor Violante. As for the latter she remained at home and bit her nails in actual despair. Within a single day her cheeks, from being red as roses changed to saffron, her eyes were red with weeping, and the beauty which had been her guest for many a season, bade farewell to visit her no more. Thus Envy is a gnawing worm which brings a blight on every garden and saps the very heart of health.

And Crystalline had no desire to be a spectacle again so soon. She was like that poor bird driven from its nest by cruel, adverse winds, but when brought back by a superior strength which set the hurricane at naught, she met no more the eagle's piercing eye, but heard around her in the quiet air the fluttering wings of doves, she could but nestle in her dear retreat with a still beating heart.

Again she fell into one of those abstracted moods in which by a peculiarity of her nature she was wont to indulge, and gazed upon the miniature of little Ralph. Then drawing forth her harp whose strings had been relaxed so long, she tuned the instrument, and sang "The hearts I've

won." It was the same song which Mabel had repeated in the wood. Here is one verse of it :

"I would not have the richest gem  
That ever flashed beneath the sun,  
Or graced a Royal diadem,  
And change it for the hearts I've won,  
And change it for the hearts I've won.

It was the hour for retiring, but first she walked upon the porch to observe the prospects of the morrow.

The moon was just rising above the hills. One by one the lights began to be extinguished in the valley, only in the distance the windows in the "Hall of the Golden Dukes" as it was called, were all a-blaze.

Wrapped in a sort of blissful reverie she continued standing within the door-way, and did not envy those whose nimble feet were moving in the dance. Still she did not despise their sport.

Seeing the shadow of a man upon the wall, she shrank a little back, but as the form approached more nearly, she recognized the outlines.

It was Rudolph, warden of the tower. He murmured something in her ear, and they both returned in the direction whence he came. She observed a dim light in her museum, in the

upper chamber, and as she ascended the winding stairs heard the low groans of poor Annette.

She was about to perish. So the lone plant which cannot thrive unpropped, when the affectionate hand which used to train it waxes icy cold, soon droops with sympathetic grief, grows wild, and struggles in the dust, and dies.

"Hush," said Crystalline, bending her head low and attentively, "perhaps I may not go in."

"You may—you must—you shall," was responded in a piercing and commanding tone within those stony walls.

Keen ears detect an angel's whisper when the things of earth grow dim. Noiselessly did the attending spirit move the heavy door upon its hinges and glide into the chamber where the sick girl lay. Her cheeks were wan and sunken, but her eyes whose brightness had outlived the hectic bloom which lingered on her cheeks blazed brightly as if a sudden drop had fed the lamp of life from an invisible hand. Her long, dark hair, indifferently parted, lay on either side upon the snowy coverlet, down to her knees, and as she threw her arms aloft, and hailed her guest, the dying child seemed like a skeleton in armour, girded with iron strength. The wife of Rudolph stood beside, and held her wrists, for she had just been terribly convulsed.

Crystalline drew near and placed her hand upon the brow of poor Annette, and bending as she wept upon her breast, kissed her cold lips as if she had been a sister.

"Is it you, child?" said the other, twining her arms about the snowy neck which leaned upon her, "I thought that you were dead and with the angels, and I should meet you there. Then you are not murdered. Child, I wished that you were gone. Now we must be parted. No one to welcome me, but—but—but—Oh, I heard the sweetest music, and I saw the form of little Ralph last night. I think my eyes were opened and that I was conscious of all things within the room, yet it might have been a dream. Oh that I had never waked. Yes, and I have seen through the windows a grey eagle flying about this ancient tower to carry off a little dove, but he would not harm it for the world—yes, a little white dove, dear Crystalline. I know that my poor brain has been disordered, but it grows clearer now and my wick is trimmed as the night draws on. I have carried many messages for you, but I shall have wings soon and can fly faster. "Ask of this poor fluttering spark," she said, placing her wasted hand upon her heart,

"and it will bear an errand to the skies with lightning speed. What says a sister to a brother?"

"Tell him that I love him, dear Annette, but I fancy that he knows it now. We have scarce been parted."

"Put your ear down close to my face now," said Annette, "and I will tell you a secret which has not been breathed. Leave us alone for a moment, kind Margaret, and then return."

The nurse obeyed the wish thus uttered by the dying girl, but with all her tenderness, her curiosity was a strong principle within her, and she left the door ajar.

"Margaret! Margaret!" shouted Rudolph from the lower landing, but she returned no answer to the summons.

"Margaret!—Margaret," he cried in a louder and more peremptory tone, "come hither."

"You fool!" she exclaimed, hurrying down stairs, "don't you know that the poor child is dying?"

Before she could return again the secret had passed from one heart to another never again to be transmitted, and lost to those whom it concerned until the judgment day in air.

'Hush!'—said Annette, speaking in a whisper—"I was once walking in the fields to hear

the birds sing, and to gather flowers to place upon my poor boy's grave. You know from what a pinnacle my hopes were cast. But my feet like my poor brain got more and more bewildered, and I met a villain who lured me farther still astray."

Here her eyes became dazzling, and the muscles of her mouth began to quiver, and a slight tremour jarred her frame.

"Speak !" said Crystalline.

"You see the victim ; would you wish to know the villain ? He has a daughter and her name is Violante."

Scarce had she spoken when terrible convulsions once more seized her. Rudolph and Margaret hurried in and held her with united strength. When her limbs were relaxed and she lay motionless within their arms, the spirit of the poor Annette had flown.

"Return with me, Rudolph," said Crystalline, and he accompanied her to her father's door.—

The Prince retired that night, but for an hour or two, as was quite natural, found no sleep. The thoughts and imaginations springing from the late events kept his mind, which was wont to be tranquil, in an excited state. He feared the royal disapprobation of the course he had taken.

If he followed the best instincts of his nature from a hasty impulse, it was numbered among his generous qualities, that he was an obedient and reverential son.

He heard the clock strike two from the turret of the distant church. When the vibrations died away all was silent except the winds which blew through the mountain cliffs, and caused the willow-limbs to rub against his chamber windows. Then he began to lapse into forgetfulness, but coy sleep was again frightened. He was sensible of a disturbance without the house. He leaned upon his elbow, and then distinctly heard a loud and reiterated knocking at the postern gate. The servants were by this time wrapped in slumbers most profound.

At last a movement was made in the castle. He heard the unbolting of doors, and the sound of voices. A foot-step resounded on the staircase, it approached, and some person knocked at his own door. He sprang from his couch, and opened it, and beheld Carl standing in his night-cap. In one hand he held a taper, and in the other a letter.

"A messenger has arrived from Court," said he.

The Prince looked at the seal, turned pale, and felt alarmed.

"Wait a few moments, if you please, good Carl."

He read the letter hastily, and then said with a smile—"all is right. This was of no such immediate consequence, and requires no present answer. Retire, Carl."

Sitting down he perused the document at more leisure. It was from his august father, and in these words :—

"We have learned beyond doubt, that in the neighbourhood where you have gone, there is the descendant of a depressed family, Sir Ralph—whose estates were confiscated a century ago, during the reign of an illegitimate duke. If he can be found, I command you, whatever his position be, in our name to pay him all due regard, and request his presence at the Court. He is our kinsman. I pray you make yourself agreeable to all the good people of the realm."

*(Signed)* MAXIMILIAN R.

It is impossible to conceive with what joy the Prince of Calos laid his head again upon the pillow, for his lovely client was his cousin.

How mere a chance, that on a sultry day he

asked a cup of water. But there is a consequence in little things.

On the morrow he walked out betimes to breathe the mountain air, and to enjoy the landscape. The sun had not yet drunk the dew from the cups of flowers in the garden. The song of birds and sound of water-falls seemed far more musical than all the harps and hautboys which he had heard on the night before. A mingled cloud of sweet remembrances came stealing on his spirit like the silvery mists which rolled before his eyes. He loved and was beloved. What more is requisite for any prince?

A servant came to announce the morning meal. The master of the house had not come down.

"He slumbers late to-day. It is not his wont," said Carl.

"Philander, go and wake the Baron."

"Go yourself," replied the dwarf.

However on receiving the signal of a sharp and angry look, the little monster thought it better to obey, and with a sad grimace he went to call his lord.

He had been gone two minutes it might be, not more, when suddenly a most unearthly shriek and wailing filled the house. The Prince and servants rushed into the hall and saw Philander

on the steps of the stair-case flapping his arms against his sides and thumping his breast with might and main. Then giving one additional how he tumbled down the steps much like a ball, and stood upon his legs.

"Is my lord arisen?" said the faithful Carl.

"Go and see," replied Philander, and he began to weep.

The Prince and all the household hastened to the chamber where the Baron slept. The sun was blazing brightly through the curtains on his couch. His face was very calm and peaceful. They spoke to him and he returned no answer, they laid their hands upon his forehead which was as cold as ice. He was stone dead.

"Alas!" exclaimed the weeping Carl, "he was the best of men."

\* \* \* \* \*

The buried him at dead of night according to his own request, without a funeral train or mockery of heraldic emblems, and as the torches glared in the cathedral crypt, and cast a momentary gleam within the vault where slept his kindred dust, old Carl prepared his final pillow, while small Philander, enveloped in a jet black cloak from head to foot, mingled his sighs and

gurgling wail with the priest's solemn tones, and made the Baron's requiem.

A winter passed away, but when the spring burst forth with flowers and singing birds to make all lovers happy, the Prince returned to claim his promised bride. Though over young, as many had declared, to marry yet, she had the strength of mind and aspect of maturer womanhood, and as she stood in garments snowy white amid a hundred of girls equal age and similarly clad, she shone superior to them all in grace and stature. A veil of finest fabric, the same which lay entangled in the meshes of the frolic bird now bleached, and like a silvery cloud, fell from her classic head and mingled with the train she bore. The soft sweet music of a nuptial chaunt was heard high up among the arches, and a holy and attempered light stole in through the cathedral windows on the group.

When the *cortege* was returning to the Knight's mansion, the lanes were full of peasants dressed in holiday attire, and as the carriage which contained the Princess came in sight they rent the air again with acclamations, and cast their wreaths of roses in her path.

On the arrival of the party, one circumstance still wore the air of mystery, and required to be

explained. The countenance of the Knight, which had hitherto been cheerful, changed to sadness so intense that it comported ill with the occasion. The Prince essayed to rally him.

"Royal Highness," exclaimed the latter, "I have lost the rarest treasure on the earth,—a true and well-tried friend."

"Nay, nay, Sir Knight, you have not lost a daughter, while you have gained a son."

"Ah!"—replied he, "you misapprehend my meaning. I have just received intelligence Hilario is dead."

"Hilario!"—the Prince replied, astonished, "and did you know him? I could swell and round the tear which falls for him. He was the noblest man who ever yielded to the pangs of grief. I have a tale to tell of him upon some fitting moment which is known to me alone. It was his life and not his death which well might cause the tear of pity to be shed. Hilario was as true as steel."

"Sir," said the other unlocking his cabinet, "here is a document which he left when he departed for the Holy Land, (whence he had a presentiment that he should not return) and which he requested to be unsealed on this occasion.

See, here is the writing with which it is endorsed :—

“ When the beams of morning bright,  
Chase the shadows of the night,

Crystalline !—

And the peaceful dove shall rest  
Frightened never from her nest,

Crystalline !—

When a bridal veil shall fall  
Snowy white upon the hall,

Crystalline !—

Hilario bids you break the seal,  
There to learn for common weal,  
What the writing shall reveal,

Crystalline !—

When the contents of the parchment were examined, it was found that Hilario had followed the example of the Baron and left what he possessed to his “ dear godchild.” Thus were the wishes of the good people of the Val Rosarum in a fair way to be gratified. The clouds which for a while had gathered cleared away that not a speck was left upon the azure deep and fortune burst with almost blinding rays upon the ruined house. Once more was heard the click of hammers, and the fallen stones resumed their places in the wall, and the tower stood not alone amidst the melancholy ruins. The blackened hearths were

soon to blaze with cheerful fires, and the halls to sound again with merry voices and the strains of minstrelsy.

Thus we have followed out the thread of this our simple story to the end, and few things more require to be told. The gipsy thieves were doomed to pay the penalty of all their crimes, but Mabel who was innocent was soon released, and took the place of poor Annette. She was a faithful servant and became a Christian.

The nest was held in sacred keeping, and the offending bird fulfilled his term within the silver bars. His fate was mitigated by those gentle arts which make a prisoner happy; fed by the hand of beauty, hung out of the casement to enjoy the sunbeams, and sheltered from the pitiless storm. One day his mistress who perceived his eyes were filmy and his head was drooping, took him out, when he immediately nestled on her breast and died. Then for the first time in many a day his wings were moist with dews, sweeter perchance than those which drop from heaven on balmy gardens.

The poor Knight's dreams were more than realized, while his partner's firmer and sublimer faith was blessed and armed with more than all it ever hoped for. And Crystalline became a hap-

py wife; but if in station she was much exalted, her heart grew humbler than it had been in her early years;—and though her own dear children thronged about her knees, and scenes of earthly splendour burst upon her sight, she sought out still the dark abodes of sorrow, and still she gazed with tender eyes upon the face of little Ralph, and when she asked her heart who stood beside her in the hour of trial, and by whom her God released her from her chains, she answered that it was HER GUARDIAN ANGEL.

THE END.



# CLARENCE.

A DOMESTIC STORY.



# CLARENCE.

## I.

"MERCIFUL Heavens! how the guns boom! Every report tells of destruction and death. The bombardment has commenced; and if the enemy take the town, their next step will be here; and if disposed to be vindictive," exclaimed the boy, pausing and looking tearfully at the couch of his dying mother, "what will become of us, already too much afflicted? There! again and again! How the panes rattle, and the whole

house is jarred ! Those cruel sounds will disturb her slumbers after the restless night. Draw the curtains closer round her, Mary. But I suppose it will be all in vain." And he bent his head to the pillow, and kissed his mother's brow.

An aged woman sat in an antique chair by the bed-side. She was tall and stately. A certain bloom which must have been very bright upon her young cheeks had never faded away, and there was that serene composure and grace in her mien, which make up a beautiful admired old age. Hers was a serenity springing not from the perpetual absence of sorrow, or from having always dwelt in some vale of quiet loveliness, but from an energy which had risen triumphant over the most poignant griefs, and a cheering faith which looked beyond the grave. "My child," said she, clasping the hand of the agitated boy, "never let despair fasten on so young a heart. If you tremble and weep on the first threshold of life, how can you breast the mighty griefs and conflicts of the world ? Learn even thus early in the hour of darkness to hope for the glimmerings of light. Though your father be dead in his country's cause, and she, poor sufferer ! your only parent on earth, in God's good pleasure may soon die,

learn to look up with me, and to say confidently,  
"Our Father who art in Heaven!"

Tears and smiles gleamed at that same moment from the uplifted eyes of the aged woman, and she looked as if she had caught the very spirit which makes the angels happy. Then with a fine eloquence, which consisted rather in aspect and expression, and in the mournful scene, than in any words which can be committed to our page, she proceeded, holding the boy's hand still in her own: "Let God be your refuge from this time, my son; and whenever troubles come you shall not flee to him in vain. You shall be shielded from those which are too heavy to be borne, by the merciful hand of Him who tempers the wind to the shorn lamb, and you shall go forth to battle with the world with a strength not your own. Look at me, Clarence. Am not I three-score years old and ten, and have I ever despaired? I have seen nearly all who were dear to me and who set out with me in the journey of life one by one fall away from my side, until I am left almost alone and unsupported except by Him. I have beheld my fondest hopes all perish, and I live but to acknowledge God's goodness, and to enjoy his benefits, and yield a willing submission to his providences; and cheerfully will abide

while I have one to love in the world, and while with these feeble arms I can sustain one drooping head. Listen to me, Clarence, and let me say now what I may not have so good an opportunity again of saying. Should your mother die ——”

The boy looked up and trembled as with an ague. “Say not so!” said he. “It cannot be; at least not yet—not yet! She has been better for a week past.”

“All things are possible with God, my son; let us ever hope the best. But whenever such an event may come, you will be left alone to guard your sister; she is your only one. I need not implore you to cherish and defend her. Your own kind heart prompts you to do all that. But should I too die, and the aged must expect to die soon, there are truths which you must diligently instil into her young mind, and teach her to read that blessed Book which I should have been so glad to do before these poor dim eyes were closed forever.”

The boy's countenance sparkled with an unwonted intelligence, and stretching forth his hand involuntarily to the sacred Book which lay near, silently indicated by his looks a promise which carried with it the force and solemnity of

an oath. Then dashing the tears from his eyes, he ran to seek his young sister in the garden, whither she had just gone. She was playing among the flowers, wildly beautiful as they. Taking her by the hand he led her back to the melancholy apartment from which she had escaped, and made her contemplate the faded form of her parent. "She is her mother's image," whispered the aged woman, "her image to the very life. The same speaking lineaments, the same auburn ringlets, the same soft large eyes."

The child gazed about her unconsciously, awed into silence, but unable to appreciate the emotions which agitated their hearts. With the exception of the dreadful sound of the distant cannon, and the ticking of a watch, and the hard respiration of the sleeper, a hushed stillness prevailed. At last some women who were neighbors came into the room to inquire how the sick person did. They looked ominously at her, whispered among themselves, and then shook their heads. "I have just been told," said one, "of a remedy which has done wonders in consumption."

"Consumption!" exclaimed the boy, looking up in consternation, and struck with the matter-of-fact air of the speaker. The dame went on to say:

"The tea of liverwort has been known to cure

the most desperate cases, if one can put any faith in what is told one. It is true our poor neighbor was not so far gone as this dear lady, but he was wonderfully ill. No one would have believed that he could live a month. He was wasted away to a shadow. He had a hectic fever, night-sweats, and a cough that was painful to listen to; and he was getting worse, until some one told him to take the tea of liverwort, and he did so that night and morning, and now he is a hale man, and ascribes his life to it. Depend upon it, it is a great remedy in consumption."

"Liverwort!" said the other, starting from his seat with eager pleasure; "then I know where it may be found, and I will go instantly to obtain it. It grows in the woods where Mary and I used to gather wild strawberries in June. Spare me a little while, grandmother. The sun is three hours high, and I will gather a goodly parcel before he goes down."

"Do not stay long, my love. Do not be absent after night-fall."

Clarence went to the door, then came back a moment, drew the curtains of the bed, and looked upon his mother's face. It was calm and peaceful, but the cheeks how sunken! At times a transient smile would flit over it, as if some pleas

ant image were suggested, or as if she were anticipating those happy scenes which could not be won without a struggle—the last struggle of death. He gazed long and ardently ; then he took a little basket upon his arm and went out.

## II.

As he left the cottage (it was the cottage where he had been born) he murmured to himself, while he cast a hasty glance about its portals, that all things wore an air of neglect. The vines wandered about wildly, the rose-trees drooped to the earth, and seemed to lament the hand which had ceased to care for them of late. Neatness and trim embellishments speak of life and taste and happiness and hope. But around the household where death hovers and threatens to be

present with his dark wing, flowers and all that is beautiful in the fields as well as the blue skies above them, are nugatory and vain. The time may indeed come again when we may merrily keep tune with the birds of spring-time, or with the reaper as he binds the sheaves of harvest; but we have no heart to enjoy the bloom or gather the flowers which spring up in the valley of tears. Nevertheless, the boy stretched forth his hand instinctively, and grasping a handful of half-blown roses which grew from a single stalk, placed them in the crown of his hat as he hastened forth upon his filial errand. He took a solitary path which led to the neighboring woods. He had just turned an angle of it, when a young woman met him from a near cottage. She might have been a year older than himself, and he stopped to converse with her a moment; and the conversation was with the easy familiarity of those who from their childhood had been friends. "The good news has already reached us," said she, brightening in all her features; "the enemy have been repulsed."

"The enemy!" said he, reflecting back the same sudden joy, and holding the girl's hand; "I seem at this moment to have none upon earth."

A crimson hue flashed over her cheeks and then receded as suddenly. A winning story had been told without words. Minutes winged their flight; but hours would have seemed as minutes. At last he reproached himself for tarrying so long, and hurried on without revealing to her his errand. He could not help glancing backward once; he saw her retreating form, and smiled. She was one whom having seen one might well look back upon, and by virtue of that second glance the heart would take her image indelibly; and if she were never seen again, it would be an era in the Heart's History. He walked with quicker step and with a better spirit. He felt happier than before. The gloom of external things had in a measure vanished, and they appeared in all their natural pleasantness, and his heart swelled with a calm courage, and his destiny seemed more clear. Thus it is that beautiful compensation is visible in God's severe providence; and when one affection is blasted or buried, there springs up a newer, sweeter one, sometimes from its very grave.

Clarence went into the woods and began to search diligently and not without success for the plant which he had heard spoken of. He knew

it by its pale flower, not unlike the violet. He pictured to himself its healing qualities, and he put the plants into the little basket with a firm confidence that they might bring back the hue of health to his mother's cheek and happiness to his home. And certainly a simpler cause than a slender flower has sometimes been sufficient to avert the shafts of death. He was very happy in this occupation, and labored until his back was weary, when perceiving that the sun was nearly down, and remembering his promise, he directed his footsteps toward home. He had proceeded a short distance, when he stopped to refresh the plants at a pure spring which bubbled up on the edge of the wood.

As he was engaged in this way, reclining idly on the turf, he was attracted by a sudden noise, and looking behind him saw four men of a rude aspect, who were unknown to him. He was not alarmed, except at the suddenness of their presence, apprehending nothing. But in an instant, before he could make any resistance or utter any cry, his mouth was closed, his arms were tightly pinioned, and he was dragged by a lonely path down to the water's edge. The ruffians then placed him in a boat which lay ready, manned the

oars, and pulled rapidly from the shore. Twilight concealed the deed. He had been hurried away by a press-gang.

### III.

WHEN evening was far advanced, and he did not return home, surprise and alarm seized on the unhappy household. What ulterior object could have detained him? He was too well acquainted with the thoroughfares to have lost his path in the woods or ignorantly to have strayed to a distance. The neighboring people were kind and participated in the apprehension. They took lanterns and commenced a vigilant search; but they saw nothing except the flare of the lights as

they streamed over chasin and ravine and rivulet, reflecting the intense darkness. They stopped at intervals, making the woods ring with their shouts; the only response which they received was the echo of their own voices. The next day they renewed the search with the same success, but they found the basket filled with liverwort by the spring; and unable to trace his footsteps, they returned, and said that he must have strayed to the river and been drowned.

The night which came on was indeed gloomy in the chamber of the dying. A storm which had been long brewing burst upon the earth with relentless fury. The large, heavy drops dashed against the panes of glass, and the heavens were incessantly lit up with sharp lightning. If the wanderer indeed lived and was in the woods, which at that time were thick and inextricable, and extended for many miles in the vicinity, what but divine power could preserve him without food or shelter through the inclement night! A child had been once bewildered in these same woods, and they were unable to discover its hiding-place, though sometimes near enough to listen to its feeble cries, until at last it was found by chance on a winter's day, lying on the ground, with berries in its hand, naked and starved and frozen.

The aged woman sat by the bed-side rocking to and fro, or with her head bent down upon her hands in agony. But her spirit was absorbed in prayer to the Father who ordereth all things in His providence; and pausing not to enquire why the innocent were afflicted, or to deprecate His rod, she begged only for sustenance, and that all things might work together for good. And it is the prayer of such which brings peace to the spirit, and cause it to be lifted heavenward above the vapors of the low earth, as the fragile plant beaten down with storms looks up to salute the sun-god. When she arose from the conflict she exhibited the same serene composure which had so long glowed upon her visage, as if it came from some perpetual source. Yet not unconsentant, a tear of pure pity stole from her eye. She noticed the small basket containing the healing plants, remembering by whose hand they had been plucked, and resolving to try their virtue, singled out a few, and placed them over the fire to be boiled. But the last tribute of an affection so touchingly bestowed was vain. The sick woman arousing, demanded impatiently her absent son. They invented some tale, which little satisfied her mind, that he had gone to a distance to obtain efficacious medicines, and would soon return.

The storm howled without. At midnight, when the taper burned dimly on the hearth, and the little Mary slept in her couch as soundly and as sweetly as if there were no troubles either within or without, and only the watchers were up, a flash, a crash, blinding, appalling, burst on the very roof, and a sulphurous vapor filled the house ; and rising above the winds, and pelting rain without, a cry struck upon the startled ear, "FIRE, FIRE, FIRE!" The alarm spread far and wide, and a crowd assembled, gazing astonished at the rare spectacle. The flames extended upward and burst out in every quarter, and whirled round, and irretrievably wrapped the whole house ; and in the deep confusion, forth from the crackling rafters and the ashes of a once happy home, a litter was hastily borne to the nearest house which offered shelter ; and there many steps were passing in and out, and strange faces gazed on the dying

It was a scene of wonder, confusion and terror. No master spirit directed the agitated people ; and on the first moment when the houseless family could reflect with calmness, they discovered that the little Mary was missing. Painful suspense reigned in their bosoms, and a messenger hastened to bring tidings ; but at that

moment a rough kind rustic brought in the frightened child, and she clung trembling to the neck of her old relative. An ejaculation, a burst of thanksgiving came from the lips of the latter. Then she consigned the child to the arms of another, and turned to watch with attentive eye a fearful paroxysm of the mother. Merciful Heaven! one other such, and she would cease to live. But her spirit yet lingered a little around earth, although full plumed for heaven; and willing to impart with her lips the last kiss, and to breathe the last farewell, she murmured passionately, though with a faltering voice; "MY SON! MY SON!—WHERE IS MY SON!"

## IV

HE was far away over the wide, wide sea. When he had been so ruthlessly torn from his home on the evening when he had gone forth on such a worthy errand, as soon as he had recovered a little from his surprise, he became conscious by the plashing of oars and the sound of the water on the keel that he was in the hands of sea-faring men ; but whither borne or for what purpose he could form no conjecture. Not a word was exchanged among the ruffian gang,

but they pulled hard at the oars, and toward the river's mouth. In an hour or more they came under the dark shadows of a ship's deck, and forcing the youth to ascend a steep ladder, instantly ushered him upon the scenes which were to him those of a new life. When he knew that the sails were set, and felt himself borne swiftly away he could not tell whether, he supplicated and wept in agony, surprise, and rage. It was all futile. The breeze blew freshly, and when the morning dawned he was far from the home of his childhood and from the friends of his youth. As he looked in the direction of the dim shores, and endeavored to recall the events of the night, he could hardly trust the evidence of his senses as to what had really happened, for all appeared like a dream. As however the full reality burst upon his mind, he was ready to die with the most violent paroxysms of grief.

Days passed over him, and he learned to submit to the hard necessity of such a cruel bondage, yielding a silent, sullen obedience, and jeered at by the rude companions of his life. He went mechanically about his allotted tasks, wrapt in a sort of oblivion, except when a memory of the past flashing over his mind drove him to the very brink of madness. One day he had ascended to

the mast-head, and as far as his eye could reach looked over the vast magnificent sea. It was calm and silent, and not a sail was to be descried over all the boundless expanse. Weary and sick at heart, he sought for some token of his childhood's home, and as he drew forth the withered roses whose fragrance was not all gone, by them he pledged himself that he never would forget his lost friends. Then the circumstances of his departure recurring to him, and how he had been robbed of his mother's parting blessing, and that he might never return to his native village again, but for the intervention of some good genius, he would have leaped into the sea. As he lay in his hammock, and ventured to reflect at all, the same madness and despair possessed him; and in a transport he stretched forth his hand to grasp an instrument of death, and his heart encouraged him to commit the great crime; but a torrent of tears coming instantly to his relief removed the weight which oppressed him; and remembering at that moment the admonitions last given by one whom he loved, and whom he never expected to behold again, he lifted up his swollen eyes and exclaimed, "OUR FATHER WHO ART IN HEAVEN!"

## V.

THEN he fell into a tranquil repose. Wandering back to the untroubled scenes of his life, he was on the firm land, listening to the songs of the birds, and to the murmuring of streams, and to the music of his native fields. The errand on which he had gone had proved successful, and there was a magical virtue in the plants he had gathered, which had restored the lost bloom to his mother's cheeks; and he saw one radiant with beauty, whose love could never change, but was

reserved for him to make his life happy. All this was a sweet dream. But it did not make the morning wretched which scattered its brief illusion, but imparted a firmer courage, and seemed a welcome assurance of that which was to be. Thus Hope like a sweet singer follows us wherever we go upon earth ; and though she may not deceive our vigilant hours, she leads the unguarded mind gently captive in dreams. Once as the youth looked abroad from his station, with only the sea around him and the heaven above him, as the hart panteth for the water brooks so his soul desired the word of God.

Nor was the wish which might have been considered a silent prayer unheard or ungranted. A comrade was committed solemnly to the deep. He obtained one relic found among his treasures, and on the title-page of the book was engraven " HOLY BIBLE." Had he left his own home a willing wanderer, such would have been the last and best gift which with the kiss of parting affection would have been bestowed ; and it is hard and it is perilous to go far, far away on the long weary journeys of adventure or ambition, without this only chart, to guide to a protected haven, or to bring the erring footsteps to the paths of innocence and peace. Weary, dejected, spirit-stricken,

the youth found golden promises and a certain solace in God's Book. He made it his companion (for he found no other) at morning and at noon, and at midnight; in sunshine and in storm and in battle; and it shared his safety; and when the ship struck a coral-reef, he swam with it in triumph to the desert shore.

Years rolled over him, and the contact of the rude world had wrought its transforming influence on his character. He had armed his soul with a stern strength and resolution, and for the imbecility of youth he had exchanged vigor and energy of manhood. During the long interval he had no tidings or missives from the home which he had never ceased to remember with tears and sadness. At last with emotions which cannot be defined (for so much of pain and doubt was mingled with a sense of pleasure) he found himself wafted toward the very haven whence he had set out. Here in terror and agony and compulsion he had commenced his wanderings, he could not tell what termination they might now have. He had found his country, but he knew not where to look for his home.

Nevertheless with a bounding throb he leaped upon his native shore, and leaving the busy mart. directed his swift steps by a well-remembered

path into the fields. The sun was sinking low in the sky, and the summer air was sweet ; and instead of the rustling of cordage and the beating waves he heard the evening carol of the birds. How sweet the transition from the dreary immensity of ocean to the verdant limits of fields and groves ! Oh ! who can know, save he whose heart has sprung toward the sea, and bounded like a bird in triumph over the waste of waters, what rapture it is to visit the land once more, to witness the sweet round of the seasons, to behold the verdure of fields, the foliage of trees, and the beauty of flowers ; to listen to the lowing of herds upon the hills, to the noisy gladness of the running rill, to the murmur of winds through the solemn groves, and to suspend the votive chaplet in the temple where he offers up his prayers ! As he advanced upon his path, every step seemed to awaken old images, and the whole train of associations which connects the present with the past ; ever bringing before him some spot remembered by romantic reveries, pleasant adventures, holiday rambles or fond partings ; and familiar faces glanced by him without the well-known recognition of other years ; for he was unrevealed to all by reason of a changed aspect, and durst

not make any inquiries, but chose to remain a little longer in suspense.

Presently he knew by the dense monuments which were seen at a distance that he was approaching the village place of graves; and beyond it he saw through the trees the spire of a small church glittering in the last rays of the sun. Here slumbered the generations of those who were once the life of yonder hamlet. A path led transversely over the spot, and it was the daily thoroughfare of those who hoped, and many with a religious trust, at one day to partake of its quiet rest. When he approached the spot sacred to the repose of those whom he had loved, he wavered and stood still, and averted his eyes and trembled. His boyish feelings returned and impetuously swayed his whole soul. As one who gazes upon a dark seal, and puts it away from him unbroken, and anticipates all, he hesitated to read the first intelligence from HOME. When at last he looked toward the scene he saw an additional white stone, but only *one*, marking the place of another grave. Many reasonings passed through his mind; he was in doubt and perplexity to whom it should belong. Bending over it by the dim light of day, he deciphered the inscription. He was standing over his mother's grave.

He remained there a little while, and the tears which fell from his eyes were very silent. Then he directed his steps to the cottage, and seeing nothing but a pile of stones and ashes, and some charred timbers, he sat down wearied on a large stone which used to be the old threshold.

Two young women were drawing water from the well. It was one of ancient construction. An upright trunk of an old tree stood near the spring, and where its first branches had once jutted forth a horizontal beam was pivoted, loaded, at one extremity, and so the water buckets attached to the other were easily drawn up. He longed to taste the waters; and rising from where he sat, and begging a little to alleviate his thirst, he found them sparkling and sweet as they were wont to be. Oh! many a time had he drunk of them and been refreshed, and many a time had he looked down upon them in boyhood to see his image, and many a time had he bathed his brow in them when weary, and many a time had he given them to the way-faring man who asked for them, and that too with a spirit which makes a cup of water doubly prized. And now, while he eagerly quaffed them again, his eyes acknowledged the matchless beauty of her who gave the boon; and as he restored the cup with

no ungracious air, he inquired if those who once dwelt there with the exception of her who slumbered in the church-yard still lived, and they answered yes, and they pointed to a cottage dimly seen among the trees.

When he turned away and left them, following the directions which had been given, they whispered eagerly together for a moment, and then one of them leaving her companion sought her own home, and wildly rushed into its doors ; and when inquired of by those who could not comprehend her hurried air, she could only laugh and weep alternately.

## VI.

WHEN the returned wanderer had followed the direction of the maidens, he came in a few moments to a secluded habitation, and hovered around in the dusk of the evening, retreating frequently from the threshold, and not knowing how to make his presence known. At last he knocked gently at the door, and a voice which he should have recognized bade him enter. He obeyed the summons, and sat down as a stranger would in the house which afforded him a casual

welcome; but his heart told him that he had found a secure resting-place, whence, after so many storms, he need not depart again upon his troublesome journey.

Ah ! how like a pleasant picture was the scene which he beheld ! The old clock telling the flight of time in the corner ; the old Bible lying open on the polished stand ; an aged woman, blind and bent down by infirmities, listening attentively, while a beautiful child, whose ringlets fell away luxuriantly from her brow, read to her out of that book. The guest, composing himself, would have affected a short concealment, but unrestrained affection wears an ill disguise. For the aged woman arose when he spoke, and her sightless eyes appeared again to beam with pleasure ; and as she took his hand in her own, she said that strange music greeted her ears, for the voice she listened to sounded marvellously like that of *her boy*. So as one detected in an unworthy act he confessed all, and joyfully wept in her embrace. Then she asked him whence he came, and he replied from over the sea.

It takes few words and little time to tell the story whose plot and incidents and stirring events up to its denouement have filled up the weary interval of many years. And when we

compute the total amount of all which we have done and suffered, how doth it dwindle down to a small reckoning. We toil and bustle, and struggle and labor through many a day—and one page suffices to declare the whole! How happily the moments flew beneath the humble roof in listening to the mutual story! And Clarence found that prayers had never ceased to ascend for him from one faithful heart, and perchance they had reached Heaven, and were answered at the very moment when he would have despaired. Thus it is that one rushes in some passionate hour to the crisis of his fate, and trembles, while in another clime the taper burns in the obscure chamber, and the prayer goes up which lets loose the guardian angel to stay the guilty hand.

Rumor, which is ever busy, flew over the little neighborhood, and groups of the aged and the young waited not for a better opportunity to gaze upon the lost found. Kindly intrusive, they mingled their tears, and embraces, and exclamations, and eager questions, with those of the small household, and could with difficulty believe the truth. The young man missed indeed the greeting of some who would have given him no less warm a welcome; for it is to be hoped that they had gone whither there is no such thing as part-

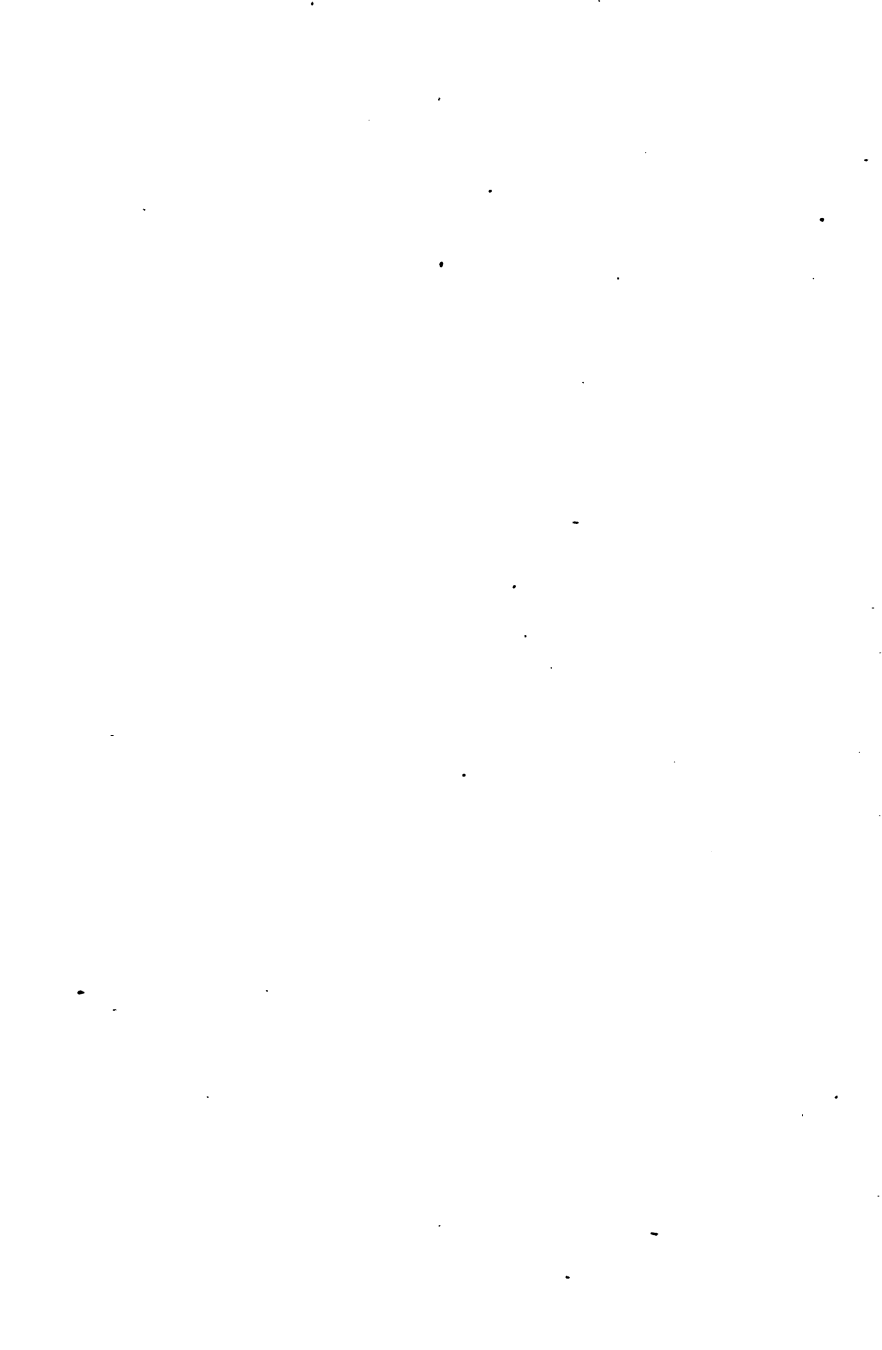
ings. But he pressed alone, beneath the holy light of even the hand which had given him the water to drink at the spring; and that night, beneath the trysting willow, he kissed the brow which for so many waning moons had been gathering paleness.

A year passed over from the date of these events, and then another aspect presented itself in the youth's dream of life. The church-going bell sounded solemnly, and the long procession winding through the green lanes and alleys paused at the ready-made grave, and ashes were committed to ashes again, and dust to dust. We acknowledge the just debt of nature when the old depart, and brush away the tears which are as bright and sparkling as for the young, not to recur to them again. As well might we weep when the glorious sun sinks down in the sky at evening, or when any glowing light is quenched in darkness, or when flowers having finished their beautiful career let fall their petals or the earth, or when the leaves wither and die at autumn, or when the wheat-crop is mowed down by the sickle, golden and fully ripe. And it is better for them, after having smiled with those who have smiled, and wept with those who have wept, and passed through all life's checkered scenes and

acquitted them of all its duties, and borne all its trials and heroically contended with its powers of evil, to lie down and sleep with patient waiting in the grave !

When Clarence returned from paying the last tribute to the old, and passed by his native cottage, he saw it still in ruins, and resolved to rescue the place from long neglect. So ere long he ordered the rubbish to be cleared away, and a new cottage arose from the ashes, and became the abode of hospitality. And its precincts were as sweet and as verdant as ever, and the neglected plants took root and flourished again ; and bright faces gathered around the hearth ; while, equal to any fortune, he who had been so severely schooled in the past learned not to despair of the future ; but burying all his griefs and forgetting all his sorrows, in the affection of his young wife, he experienced once more, and with tears of gratitude, WHAT IT IS TO BE HAPPY.









Mary Elapp



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